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Thoughts on the Sabbath

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THOUGHTS

ON

THE SABBATH:

WITH SEVERAL

VILLAGE SERMONS.

Διὸ οὐκ ἀμελήσω ὑμᾶς ἀεὶ ὑπομιμνήσκειν περὶ τούτων καίπερ εἰδότας, καὶ ἐστηριγμένους ἐν τῇ παρούσῃ ἀληθείᾳ.—ΠΕΤ. ΕΠΙΣ. Β. Κεφ. ά. 12.

"The world does not require so much to be informed as reminded."
PRACTICAL PIETY, Vol. I.

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1828.

TO THE

RIGHT HON. AND RIGHT REV. FATHER IN GOD,

WILLIAM HOWLEY,

THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,

WITH HIS PERMISSION

THIS WORK

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THOUGHTS

ON

THE SABBATH.

PART I.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE SABBATH

THE first institution of the Sabbath has been involved in considerable obscurity, from the passage in Genesis relating to it being disputed, as to whether it were not written by anticipation; and from there being no direct evidence of its subsequent observance, during the days of the patriarchs.

Some writers contend, that it was not a paradisiacal institution; though they allow it to have been observed by the patriarchs: others maintain, that it was not instituted until the time of Moses.

Drs. Taylor, Bedford, Patrick, and many other eminent authors, assert, that the sanctification of the Sabbath is the first of God's institutions and coëval with the creation; adding, that it must have a real foundation in the nature of man, and an immediate connexion with our being and the great and excellent ends of it *. The sacred historian, they observe, expressly relates, that God blessed and sanctified the day on which he rested or ceased from his work of creation.

On the contrary it is said by Seldon and others, that they who are for carrying the observance of the Sabbath as far back as the creation, pretend to deduce it from Exod. xvi, 22; and seem to say no other reason can be assigned for the ceasing of the manna on the seventh day, than its having been kept holy by the professors of the true religion, in memory of God's resting from the works of the creation. But to tell us, say they, that the Sabbath was continually observed by our first

* They rely for their opinion on Gen. ii, 3.

parents in Paradise, and by the patriarchs, and was the rest for which Pharaoh chided Moses, is worthy of the reveries of a rabbinical commentator, and deserves to be adopted only by a dreaming Christian; since the sacred volume affords us not a single instance of the observance of this day, before that of the Israelites in the Desert. The Gemara styles this, *Shabbath Rehonah*, i. e. the first Sabbath. Jarchi confines the blessing of the Sabbath in the second of Genesis to the double quantity of manna, which fell on the preceding day; and the same reason is assigned in Bereshith Rabba. Upon the whole, they therefore conclude, that the just inference from this verse is, that the rest of the Sabbath was first appointed at the falling of the manna.

Mons. Beausobre likewise adopted a similar opinion, and pursued a similar train of reasoning. He advances, first, "that Scripture does not make the least mention of the Sabbath being observed before the coming of the children of Israel out of Egypt; though there are frequent accounts of

the worship which the patriarch rendered to God. Now is it probable," he asks, "that the sacred historian would have omitted so holy and solemn a law as that of the observance of the Sabbath; a law, the violation of which was punished with death; a law, which, having been delivered from the beginning of the world, ought to have been universally received; and not have spoken of it till two thousand years after its institution? Moses, indeed, when giving an account of the times which went before him, speaks of the number *seven*, as if it had been accounted holy, but says not the least word about the Sabbath. Would not the same sacred historian, who has so carefully and exactly transmitted to posterity the travels of the patriarchs, have sometimes taken notice of their stopping to celebrate the Sabbath? or can it be supposed, that the patriarchs would have neglected to observe so strict a command?" Such are the objections urged against the observance of the Sabbath before the days of Moses.

These opinions are calculated to perplex the

mind: but when the reader finds, that there are many reasons why a Sabbath should have been appointed in the beginning; that there is not one, why there should not; and that the need of a Sabbath, if it ever existed, did so as much at that time as at any future period; he will, I think, be satisfied with the evidence of its paradisiacal institution; and especially when he reflects, that the writers who maintain the contrary opinion found it upon no direct or distinct evidence, but rely altogether on the circumstance of its observance by the patriarchs and in Paradise not being related in sacred history. The omission of a probable fact by any writer cannot disprove it; and the inference from any such omission abates upon every gleam of circumstantial evidence in support of it.

For myself, with those eminent writers to whom I first alluded, I rely on the introduction of the Sabbath by Moses in the second chapter of Genesis, as sufficient proof of its observance being a positive duty enjoined by the Almighty on man

after the creation. We are told in this chapter, that on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and God blessed and sanctified it.

Moses in his history of the world never would have mentioned the seventh day in this impressive and emphatic language, had he not considered it a day rendered holy from the beginning by the express command of God, and by the Creator dedicated to devotional and religious purposes.

Mons. Beausobre's arguments will appear from the following pages to rest upon an extremely slender foundation: because, to prove that a thing never was in existence, is not to be accomplished by proving, that something else which was in existence, and supposed to have been similar to it, had this or that attached to it; which from all that we can learn does *not appear* to have belonged to the former, but the contrary.

Thus he assumes, that the infringement of the Sabbath under the patriarchs, which he is contending never existed, was punishable with death; which we only know was the case with the Sabbath

in the days of Moses. Besides, I believe the law to have been universally received; indeed it must have been, if the history of man be true: and we are not to suppose the non-existence of the paradisiacal Sabbath, on account of the dereliction of the commands of God by *idolaters*. But we are not totally without evidence as to its being obscurely known or cherished among men.

The isolated circumstances, upon which the objections to the paradisiacal institution of the Sabbath rest their theory, render it material to advert to the design and plan of Moses in writing his sacred history.

These were to give the history of the Creation of the world; to unite the chain of past days, which had been broken, to that of the days in his own time: it was to go on and tell the gloomy tale of the fall of man, to revive the tidings of the promised seed: it was, amid the population of the world and the dispersion of mankind, to select and mark out, and by the line of blood to carry on the pedigree of that race, from which the Mes-

siah was to spring: in fine, it was in its grand design, not to show the origin of the second Law merely (for assuredly a first Law had been given), but to point out the CAUSE of this Law being renewed, and the occasion for its continuance and preservation. So Ezra, in the First Book of Chronicles, merely recapitulates the history of mankind from the beginning till after the captivity in Babylon, to indicate clearly the line from which the Messiah should arise. Compared to this design and object, the observance of the Sabbath, which was afterward to be recited in a way sufficiently powerful to induce mankind not to neglect it, was of very inferior importance. How little reason, therefore, is there for saying, that because the observance of the Sabbath was not noticed in express terms in Genesis oftener than it is, the Sabbath never was observed by the patriarchs! Moses has given us a history in Genesis sufficient and satisfactory enough for *its purpose*, and to the truth of which Jesus Christ and the apostles bore witness; but it is by no means

a clear, digested, and perfect history, as the confusion arising from frequent repetitions, irregularities, and many omissions in it, shows.

The space of time embraced in the Book of Genesis will be sufficient of itself to account for the omission of the observance of the Sabbath, and several facts which are to be inferred from the Gospel writers as having occurred; for the book includes a space of two thousand three hundred and sixty-nine years or more.

When we consider too, that it was not the object of Moses to give a full and perfect history of religion, much less of the observance of the Sabbath; and when we see the history of many families connected with the Israelites left out altogether; is it a subject for wonder, that Moses after his call, knowing he must subsequently relate the reinstitution of the Sabbath in a manner admitting no doubt as to the duty of observing it, should neglect to say in Genesis in positive terms, that the patriarchs rested at this or that place on the Sabbath day, when, all along in the narration,

he has given us reason to infer that it was so; and that they not only rested for its observance, but appointed places for worship, and left priests at some of these places when they proceeded on their journeys? The lawgiver has stated, that the Sabbath was instituted after the Creation, that the seventh day was blessed and sanctified by the Almighty; and thus has left us to conclude, that, being instituted, "so holy and solemn a law" was of course duly observed. Monsieur Beausobre himself acknowledges, that the purpose of the Sabbath was partly to keep alive the remembrance of the Creation, and "prevent idolatry and the worshipping of creatures:" and assuredly, if it were so necessary an ordinance to these ends, and such, from all accounts, it appears to have been, it was most likely kept up at least in one family until Joseph's death, when the Pharaohs put an end to it as a *public* duty.

Josephus, whose opinion with many has great weight, writes thus concerning the institution of the Sabbath: "Accordingly Moses says, that just

in six days the world, and all that is therein, was made; and that the seventh day was a rest, and a release from the labour of such operations; whence it is, that we celebrate a *rest from our labours on this day*, and call it the Sabbath, which word denotes *rest* in the Hebrew tongue." And when reciting the intention of the commandments, for the Jews hold it profane to write them literally down, he says the fourth commandment is, "that we must keep THE SEVENTH DAY, by resting from all sorts of work." Josephus certainly intends here the one he had mentioned before, after his account of the Creation; and he gives not in any part of his interesting work the slightest intimation of the Sabbath commemorating the deliverance from bondage, which some affirm.

The supposition, that the patriarchs did not observe the Sabbath, arising from the silence of Moses, disappears, when we reflect upon the probable, to me the apparent, cause of the omission. There are many persons who perhaps do not know, that, notwithstanding the reinstitution of

the Sabbath under Moses, there is not an instance mentioned in the Old Testament of its being actually observed, except twice only in the Psalms. Whenever allusion is made to it, it is as to an ordinance and to a day neglected, when certain acts ought to be done, and others left undone. Yet the circumstantial evidence of its observance is so strong, that I have only mentioned this circumstance as a matter of curiosity. Should the silence of Moses upon this subject be admitted as proof, what becomes of the authority of the sacred writers of the New Testament, who speak of Enoch's prophesying, and Noah's preaching, and of Jannes and Jambres, who withstood Moses; and who allude to other things, of which there is no narration in the Books of Moses? Hence, how little reliance is to be placed upon proof deduced from a negative principle, when circumstantial evidence is to be had! and how unfair is any inference derived from such a source! To the New Testament we are indebted for instances of the observance of the Sabbath. But if the patriarchs

observed the Sabbath, the Sabbath must have been a paradisiacal institution, since they could derive the obligation of this duty *only from that time and place;* no record of a later institution being to be found, and it not being an institution discoverable by the light of nature.

The Fall of Man evinces, that his condition in Paradise, although honoured by the presence and converse of God occasionally, was not one of independence, or to be consumed in fruitless luxury and idleness. "On the seventh day," we are told in Genesis, "God ended his work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." Here it may be asked, for what purpose did God "set apart" this day, for so many interpret his sanctifying it? We can imagine only for purposes of devotion. It would not be for the Almighty himself to meditate on his own perfections: it could not be for Him to worship his own power; and therefore, it must have been for that wonderfully-created being, Man, to discharge these duties. Nor was God's resting on this

day the same as sanctifying: one was the cause, the other the result; which the incorporating of the Sabbath into the Law of Moses proves. It is said, that Moses wrote this passage in Genesis by anticipation. It is very strange if he did. From his history of the world in the beginning take away this account of the Sabbath, which was written by anticipation, and what was done, or is to be done with the *seventh* day, which the word Sabbath has invariably signified? We have the history of each day, and what took place upon it: so far belief accompanies the creation. What, then, renders the appointment of this Sabbath on the seventh day improbable? It is again replied, Because we have no notice taken of its observance till the arrival of the Israelites in the wilderness. The solidity and justice of this argument shall be farther considered. All candid and temperate men allow, that the conversations of Adam and Eve with the Deity in the Garden are very much shortened; and we must suppose, that many of them are omitted altogether. But as the Sabbath

was instituted after the creation, and was "made for man," it is most probable that Adam did receive a law from God, and was instructed in the worship of the Deity. That he must have been so taught appears in the conduct of his sons, who could have learned from Adam only the nature and use of offerings and sacrifice. The offerings of Cain and Abel were brought to a certain spot, *at a set time*, very likely every day, surely on the seventh, the Sabbath, which had been blessed and sanctified, or "set apart," as Beausobre says, so recently.

This is the only instance of sacrifice being offered to God related to have happened during about one hundred and twenty years: but, to say, on this account, no other did take place, would be very absurd. Why was even this mentioned? It was necessary to be introduced, to show how Seth became heir of the Promises, to teach us the cause of "the righteous Abel's death," and that in his stead was Seth raised up. Every fact, however minute it may be, which is recorded in

Genesis, had an ultimate design in it; and there is not one in this portion of the Bible that appears to have been communicated by chance, or as it presented itself irregularly to the memory of Moses. I think it evident, the Sabbath was mentioned first where it is in Genesis, to leave the inference, that, though known, after the Fall it fell into neglect, as will hereafter appear. And it is likely, that this very offering would not have been recorded, had it not been of use for the above purpose. Moses's history of the first ages is incomplete as a history of the world, though sufficient for all our ends: for even that a Law had been given before his time might be proved in many ways.

"Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat." On these words Bishop Horne remarks, "This is the first and the only law recorded to have been promulgated in the state of man's innocence. It may therefore be reasonably supposed to have contained in itself the substance of many other laws." Farther the

Bishop adds, " That God had revealed and made himself known to Adam appears from the circumstances related, namely, that he took him and put him into the Garden of Eden; that he conversed with him and *communicated to him a Law*, to be by him observed." " Whenever the Garden of Eden is mentioned in Scripture, it is called ' The Garden of God,' or ' The Garden of the Lord,' expressions which denote some peculiar designation of it to sacred purposes, some appropriation to God and his service, as is confessedly the case with similar phrases; such as, ' house of God,' ' altar of God,' ' man of God,' and the like; all implying, that the persons and things spoken of were consecrated to him, and set apart for a religious use."—" That some of the objects in Eden were of a sacramental nature, we can hardly doubt, when we read of ' the tree of knowledge,' and ' the tree of life.' "—" It is remarkable, that in the earliest ages a custom should be found to prevail, both among the people of God and idolaters, of setting apart and consecrating gardens

and groves for the purpose of religious worship. Thus Abraham, we are told, 'planted a tree, or grove, at Beersheba, and called on the name of the everlasting God.' The worshippers of false Gods are described, in the writings of the prophets, as 'sacrificing in gardens,' (as purifying themselves in gardens) behind 'one tree in the midst:' and it is foretold, that they should be 'ashamed for the oaks which they had desired, and confounded for the gardens which they had chosen.'"

A surprising conformity in this point may be traced through all the different periods of idolatry, as subsisting among the Canaanites, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans. Groves were dedicated to the Gods, and particular species of trees were sacred to particular deities. The same usage prevailed among the Druids in these parts of the world. And to this day the aisles of our Gothic churches and cathedrals are evidently built in imitation of those arched groves, which of old supplied the place of temples. It is

not therefore without reason, that the author of a learned dissertation on the subject makes the following remark: "These were the hallowed fanes of the ancients, in which they performed divine worship. And, indeed, if we would trace up this rite to its origin, we must have recourse to the true God himself, who instituted in Paradise a sacred garden or grove, ordained Adam to be high priest of it, and consecrated in it two trees for a public testimony of religion." These various sentiments I have collected for corroborating my own, in the endeavour to show, that the Sabbath had its origin with the first institution of religion in Paradise.

St. Paul says, "I had not known sin but by the Law; for I had not known lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet;" whereas, St. John says, "*The works of Cain were evil, and his brother's righteous.*" In what Cain's wicked life consisted, we do not learn. But St. Paul must not be understood to signify no moral laws were instituted before the time of Moses, for

he has allowed, that "*by one man came sin into the world.*" Hence, if by a law came the knowledge of sin, it was in the transgression of this law, that the sin was committed. On the other hand, by the observance of a law must the righteousness of Abel be reckoned, and also that of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. "For until [before] the Law, sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed, where there is no Law." According to the Apostle then, sin could not have been imputed to our first parents, if they had not received from God a Law, the transgression of which was sin, and entailed upon their posterity the curse attached to it. I apprehend, therefore, a new Law must have been delivered very early after the Fall, and one before it. What either of these Laws was I do not pretend to say, few or no traces of them, beyond that of *sacrifice*, being left. They were, we are assured by the inspired writers, in part the Law of Faith: and this law did seem then to enjoin a holy life: since, as mortality, or death, was the punishment

passed upon all mankind for the first transgression, the visitations of unusual or signal destruction upon many of the first generations were not for the same transgression; but these visitations prove, that, independently of the first sin, men committed acts, which without a law had not been sin, for sin is not imputed where there is no law; but, as their sins were transgressions both of the intent of nature and the Law of God, they were punished in an extraordinary and additional manner for them: while on the contrary those who led a righteous life were spared; and as sin consists in the transgression of the law, so must righteousness in the observance of it: and St. Paul subjoins to the above passage concerning sin, the following: "Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them which *had not sinned* after the similitude of Adam's transgression." True it is, that Adam's transgression brought in mortality: but this gave occasion for a new law to be instituted directly, subsequent to that observed in Paradise: and by

the " reign of death" in this interval we are not to infer, that a total end was put to those generations, for in the resurrection with the patriarchs, who had the promises, they will appear. " God having provided" nobly, that they, even the patriarchs, " without us" who are now alive, " cannot be made perfect." So it is in the parable of the vineyard, " the first shall be last and the last first;" just as death may be said to have reigned from Moses to the coming of the Messiah, and thence until now—and " the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." The account of Hades given by Josephus is worthy of attention, as it contradicts the notion some entertain, that the Hebrews did not believe in a future state. But I suppose the truth is, though the chief Hebrews believed in it, it was unknown to the commonalty.

They had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, but they did sin against the positive ordained laws of God, as is witnessed in one instance by the Deluge.

To suppose the Deluge was sent because of any transgression against the design of Nature solely, or for the first sin, is incorrect: because not only the corruption engendered by the Fall completely obscured and changed for a while the Law of Nature, and things were then done by Nature* contrary to the purposes of the creation, which were contrary to the Law of God; but because it would imply, that no other transgressions of the Law of God were signally to be visited and punished. But, says St. John in one of his Epistles, "*Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the Law; for sin is the transgression of the Law.*"

I know, St. Paul says, "*the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ,* THE LAW, *which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul.*" These four hundred years after the Promise, of which St. Paul is speaking,

* "But the Canaanites were to be utterly exterminated, to vindicate the honour of humanity, and to put a stop to a spreading contagion, *which changed* the reasonable nature into brutal."—WARBURTON.

are generally dated from the time of the departure of Abraham out of Haran; still, the great promise had been made long before that period, when it was afterward renewed to Abraham; yet the generation existing when he wrote his epistle knew or was bound only by the renewal of the Law, or the Law of Moses, who was then called; and therefore, when St. Paul writes of the Law which was made four hundred and thirty years after Abraham, it does not destroy the evidence of a law having been in existence long before the Bondage in Egypt, and even before Abraham's time also. It only means, that the subsequent Law of Moses, which was then held to be in force, neither did nor could supersede the necessity and the coming of the Messiah. On what the Law was before the days of Abraham we can state nothing precisely: after his appearance we know he paid tithes, and Jacob vowed his tenths; sacrifices were more perfectly understood*, and also the rite

* It is remarkable, that under the law of Moses no other sacrifices were required, than what were taken from the five kinds of animals used by Abraham.

of circumcision. "Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision, not because it is of Moses, but of the Fathers." Hence it must be acknowledged, that a First Law had been given before the time both of Moses and of Abraham; of which indeed we have farther proof in the conduct of the priest found in Midian, and of his daughter Zipporah also in the later period of the two epochs *.

These are rays, that discover here and there amid the darkness, in which the subject is involved, a first law, at least before that of Moses, to have been established; and may account for the mention of the Sabbath in Genesis. We have found symptoms of its existence even before the days of Abraham; and from the use of the Sabbath it is most likely, that the Sabbath was one among its ordinances. Bishop Patrick remarks, "it is not easy to determine how these brothers, Cain and

* It is written in the Psalms of David,

"With Jacob he made a covenant, and *to Israel he gave a law;*" but these words are ambiguous. Nevertheless, supposing they were not, it does not follow, that a previous Law was not delivered in Paradise.

Abel, were led to sacrifice at all, either of the first fruits of the earth, or the firstlings of the flock; we read of no command enjoining such peculiar service and worship: from which Grotius and others have concluded, that a grateful disposition would lead men to offer the great Creator a portion of those blessings, which they owed to his bounty."—"But," says another writer, "admitting this to be the case, how could Abel believe, that this sacrifice would be acceptable to God, as the Apostle says it was, 'by faith?' Heb. xi, 4. Faith must necessarily have reference to some covenant or promise, and is a principle distinct from natural reason. It is probable, therefore, that Adam received some intimation, if not an express command from God, on this subject. There is no record of this indeed by Moses, in his very short and compendious narrative, in which it has been observed many other things are omitted." Besides, Cain's tribute, it is supposed, was an unwilling offering, and not dictated by any grateful feeling. It appears, that these offerings of Cain

and Abel are said to have been made "at the end of days," upon which expression Dr. Kennicott in his two dissertations says, "The noun קץ, it is certain, signifies the extremity by which any continued quantity is separated; and when applied to time, the conclusion of so much time as the word adjoined to it specifies. And therefore Fagius, commenting on this place, tells us, it seems entirely rational, that by this phrase, *the end of days*, is to be understood some certain and appointed time, on which they met for the worship of God; for there was always, even before the Law (of Moses), an order in the Church of God, by the means of distinguished times; and this opinion, *says he*, is confirmed by the word קץ, which does not simply signify *an end*, but an *end certain, precise, and determinate.*

"The point then now is—what determinate portion of time is meant by the word ימים, days; and it seems necessary, that it should here signify either a *week* or a *year*. The latter is the opinion mostly, I believe, indulged; though, perhaps,

without the greatest reason, as may appear from the following considerations.

"'Tis plain, that the historian gives these as *his own* words; and, therefore, had he intended to signify *at the end of the year*, he probably would not have used the word ימים days, but שנה a year, which he so frequently uses in the very next chapter, and is used by God himself, Genesis xvii, 21. Or he would have used that other phrase בצאת שנה *in the end of the year;* which we meet with in Exodus xxiii, 16. But what may be urged with greater force, the very phrase שבה מקץ is used by this same author in Exod. xii, 14. Wherefore his not using either of these expressions, especially the latter, but expressing himself by the former, seems to prove the one chosen in opposition to the others. Besides, I do not find that the very phrase מקץ ימים signifies *at the end of the year* any where in the Bible; it occurs indeed but in one other place, as in the text here disputed, and that is in Kings xvii, 7.; and there is no possible reason for confining the expression

to a year in that place. Wherefore we may conclude, with the learned Gussetius, that neither is there any reason why we should think a year intended in this place; for, *says he*, on the contrary rather, the revolution or course of the year will scarce agree with the affair in hand; for if you should begin the year from the month Tisri, those oblations would have been *too late*, and if you begin with Nisan, they had been *too soon*, there not being at that time fruits to offer." 2nd edit. p. 178.

After a period of about one hundred and thirty years, Adam begat Seth. In this period it is not likely, that the account of the creation would be forgotten; and from the sacrifices of Cain and Abel we may infer, that more special directions were originally given to Adam, when the Almighty held conversations with him in the Garden of Eden, and that the Law was then in force. Next, as Seth was raised up in the room of Abel, *and the history of Cain's posterity is omitted*, Seth would of course receive the account of his brother's death from his father Adam, with the cause of it:

which would of course bring up the subject of offerings and sacrifice, and induce Seth to learn the intention of them: this again would involve a detail of the history of the Creation, the institution of the Sabbath, and the many conversations in the Garden. The lives of the Fathers extending so far as they did into the lifetimes of the eldest sons, it may not be superfluous briefly to set down the genealogy of Noah in this place, as it will serve to explain how naturally the remembrance of the Sabbath might have been kept up. Adam lived eight hundred years after Seth was born, having other sons and daughters. Seth after one hundred and five years had a son, who was called Enos, and Seth lived nine hundred and twelve years in the whole. Enos after ninety years had a son, Cainan; and Enos lived eight hundred and fifteen years, having other sons and daughters, and died in his nine hundred and fifth year. Cainan lived seventy years, and had Mahaleel, and lived eight hundred and forty years after this, having other sons and daughters. Mahaleel in his sixty-fifth year had Jared; and, having

had other sons and daughters, died in his eight hundred and ninety-fifth year. Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years before he had Enoch; and, having had other sons and daughters, died in his nine hundred and sixty-second year. Enoch in his sixty-fifth year had Methuselah; lived three hundred years after, having other sons and daughters; and at the age of three hundred and sixty-five was translated. Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years before he had Lamech; and, having had other sons and daughters, died in his nine hundred and sixty-ninth year. Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and had Noah; had afterward other sons and daughters, and died in his seven hundred and seventy-seventh year; and Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet.

Thus far have I proceeded in the genealogy, to point out clearly that Moses, when writing the history of the world, had one ultimate object very apparently in view, to which he shaped his course in as direct a line as he could, omitting, as he

passed on, whatever was not perfectly material to his object. Accordingly in one direct line only after Seth has he given the genealogy of Noah; among whose ancestors each eldest son would hand down to his eldest son all antecedent history, which would be confirmed by the successive grandfathers to their children, while they survived during the lifetime of their sons. Subsequently, the line of descent crossed into the younger sons about five different times, yet the genealogy is nevertheless faithfully kept up. According to Josephus, b. 1, c. 2, Lamech, the son of Methuselah, "was so skilful in matters of divine revelation, that he knew he was to be punished for Cain's murder of his brother." And concerning Seth's posterity he says, "Now this posterity of Seth continued to esteem God as the Lord of the universe, and to have an entire regard to virtue, for seven generations: but in process of time they were perverted, and forsook the practices of their forefathers, and did neither pay those honours to God which *were appointed them*, nor had they any concern to do justice towards men." Among these ancestors of

Noah one is remarkably righteous; and, as his righteousness must have consisted in outward as well as inward acts of piety, it may have been in somewhat more than the observance of the Law of Faith (since the apostles own the patriarchs had this law), and of that strict commandment to keep the seventh day, the Sabbath, holy. When Enos was born, we are told, "then began men to call on the name of the Lord;" and, notwithstanding the interpretation, which some writers have put upon the second verse in the sixth chapter of Genesis, and the subsequent corruption among mankind, I am of opinion, that men did then begin to observe more regularly commandments, statutes, and laws, and to appropriate the Sabbath to holy convocations in the families of the eldest sons, which the righteousness of Enoch and of Noah seems most fully to declare: and that it was Cain's posterity in part, and the younger branches of the families of the various heirs, who subsequently were the cause of the Deluge being sent upon the Earth. This is probable, because "those sons of

God" being sons of the heirs, and consequently the younger branches from Adam, who was born, as it were, of God the Father, these sons were they who " saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all which they chose," and began to live wickedly. Enoch, who was but the fourth eldest son from Enos, and the seventh from Adam, is affirmed by St. Jude to have prophesied of the Messiah, when he said, the Lord would come " to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed." From this we may suppose, that the Law of God was known in that period, or such a prophecy could scarcely have been understood by those to whom it was addressed.

When the wickedness of mankind had exceedingly increased, and the Almighty was resolved to put a stop to it, we still find an eldest son, the tenth from Adam, with his family, consisting of eight persons, behaving piously. So when the Deluge was about to be poured down from Heaven,

and the ark was made, "*the Lord said unto Noah, come* THOU AND ALL THY HOUSE *into the ark, for thee have I seen righteous before me in* THIS GENERATION." This passage is a strong authority for believing, that in the eldest son's families, from Seth to Noah, the first law had been preserved, and the keeping of the seventh day, the Sabbath. We shall learn soon that Noah was still aware of the nature of sacrifices, and that he received additional information concerning them; but how much greater weight is given to this opinion, when we find, that Noah, who by St. Peter is called a PREACHER *of* RIGHTEOUSNESS, sent forth the raven from the ark on the sixth day, intending, in all probability, if it had returned, to have offered sacrifice on the seventh! Moses specifying an account of time in this matter shows, that Noah was keeping up a calculation of months and days. When the raven returned not, Noah sent forth a dove, very probably the day after the raven had been dismissed, which was at the end

of forty days, consequently on the forty-first; so that the next day after that when the dove was let loose would be a seventh day. I am aware it cannot positively be asserted, that the forty days were reckoned from week to week, from the seventh day to the seventh: but when the dove returned, what does Noah? He stays yet *other seven days*, and then again sent forth the dove, and the dove came back on "*the evening of the seventh day*," with "an olive leaf plucked off." "So Noah knew the waters had abated." Then Noah staid yet other *seven days*, and sent forth the dove, which returned no more. "On the seven-and-twentieth DAY OF THE MONTH," the earth was sufficiently dry for Noah and all with him to go out of the ark, which they did. This departure might occupy a day and no more for the human beings. As soon as they were out, which brings it to the twenty-eighth day, the seventh in a week, Noah built an altar and sacrificed to God. It is more than probable Noah used firstlings: and when the Lord directed at that time the blood

of living creatures not to be touched by human lips, the blood being the life thereof, it is very likely, that other instructions were given also, of which Moses did not think it worth while to give an account.

When Noah had built his altar, Moses says he took of every *clean* beast, and every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings upon it. By the term "clean" it is obvious he alluded to animals of a peculiar description, which had been by some one previously commanded, in like manner as they were ordered afterward to be selected in the law of Moses. Thus we distinctly ascertain, that Noah was keeping up a reckoning of time, of *months*, and of days; and the inference, that it was from Sabbath to Sabbath is no less just than strong, as well as that a first law had been given. Nor does Beausobre's argument, used by him indeed for another end, disprove the probability. He writes: "When God sent the deluge into the world for *men's iniquities*, among the crimes laid to their charge we do not find they are ever

accused of breaking the Sabbath, which would nevertheless be a crime committed against the majesty of Heaven." This implication takes us immediately into the subject of the posterity of Noah, as the events of his own lifetime afford no farther information of the kind required. The names of Noah's sons, who went out of the ark with him, were Shem, Ham, and Japhet; and by these was the whole Earth overspread. With Ham and Japhet we are not concerned. It was for the transgression of the former of these, that the Canaanites were cursed.

The confusion of languages, and the dispersion of mankind at Babel, are mentioned, but the actual date is not set down, the history being clear enough in keeping up the line of connexion between the fathers and the sons. From Shem in the right line the descent comes down to Terah, the father of Abram, afterward Abraham. Moses continuing his history of this family, they are brought from Ur of the Chaldees through Canaan, and by famine are driven into Egypt. But

in the plain of Moreh the Lord appeared unto Abram, and told him, " Walk before me, and be thou perfect ;" and then Abram was to possess the promised land. At this spot it is thought Abraham built an altar. Certain it is, that it was a consecrated place: near it Jacob cast into the earth " the strange gods ;" at this spot Rebekah's nurse was buried; it was hereabout that Joshua set up a Great Stone ; it was here that the sons of the old prophet found the man of God; and it was to this spot Abraham returned, when he came up out of Egypt; and here he " called upon the name of the Lord." By the occurrence of this expression several times in the scriptures, Moses has implied, that something more than a short, hasty, or temporary service to God, as if upon a march, was performed ; and when we observe that this act of worship occurred at an appointed place, where several circumstances connected with a public religion had happened, we may consider it to have been an established place of worship. Going on farther from the plain of Moreh, Abraham built

another altar between Ai and Bethel; and though Moses has omitted to state the purpose for which this altar was raised, no one, considering who he was, and what he was doing, will say, that therefore this altar was but a monumental stone, and no sacrifices were made upon it. Abraham, it is more likely, erected this altar, and many others, that, wherever he should be obliged to halt with his people, he might observe the Sabbath, and sacrifice to the Lord. From the general tenor of this part of the scriptures, I believe this supposition cannot easily be refuted, as presently the mourning at Atad will prove. After the division of the land between Abraham and Lot, and Abraham had sacrificed to the Lord, Abraham went to Hebron, where he erected another altar. So that it appears, wherever Abraham went, and intended to tarry any length of time, he did erect an altar; and from the veneration in which the place was held where the first altar of Abraham was reared, we must infer, that these altars were built for divine service and the observance of the Sabbath.

For the purposes of some instituted religion, at least, they must have been intended; and for these more likely than any other. After the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, the king of Sodom came out to meet Abram; and *Melchizedec, the priest of the Most High God,* brought forth bread and wine, and said, "Blessed be Abram" [priest also] "of the Most High God;" "and he [Abram] gave him tithes of all."

Here, then, we may pause, and recollect, that we have already heard of *firstlings* and of first-fruits, of *clean beasts* and of *clean fowls,* of burnt-offerings and sacrifice, and of Noah's altar; and now we have an imperfect account of two priests of the Most High God; one of them building altars wherever he goes and sojourns, and paying tithes to the other; while the other confers the blessings. This being the case, can it be doubted, that some religion or other was prevailing, some rites observed, and some day set apart for the performance of these things? The same law, which said, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall

his blood be shed," is as likely to have commanded many other things, which have been omitted. When the Lord is again about to make a promise to Abraham, Moses acknowledges, that Abraham was taught of God another species of sacrifice, in the performance of which the covenant or promise of God was to be confirmed. These are all signs of a religion being observed, or the sanction of a vow by the mere slaughter of beasts could never have been understood. The rite of circumcision, according to the history first taught Abraham in token of God's covenant, is introduced very abruptly by Moses: which evinces, that, as it was a peculiar and essential sign, it was then to be mentioned, to show its origin; but that he did not intend to exhibit a full historical deduction of the religion of the world, its beginning, and its progress; bearing in mind, perhaps, that he would have to give a particular account of the religion extant and in force in his day, in which he was personally concerned. We are told by Josephus, that Amram, who was the father of Moses, for the

sake of the Hebrews " betook himself to prayer to God; and entreated him, to have compassion on those, who had in no instance transgressed *the laws of his worship:*" which strongly implies a law to have been extant before the birth of Moses, of which he has given no account.

At the place on the plains of Mamre, where Abraham built an altar, he dwelt a great number of years, till the angels appeared to him and Sarah; and, when the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was contemplated, it was not hidden from Abraham, but he was forewarned of it; because the Lord knew, that Abraham " *would command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment.*" By " the way of the Lord," and " justice and judgment," we must understand two distinct duties: the former implying an established religion, the latter, civil rights; and, probably, in the heads of this family was vested the power of putting the laws in force. About this time frequent

were the conversations between the Lord and Abraham; and Abraham is the first who is styled a prophet by Moses, although St. Jude speaks of Enoch as such. If Abraham, who built the altars, were blessed by the Almighty, because he kept the way of the Lord, and would command his children after him to do the same, no doubt he *kept* the Sabbath, and all the other commandments, statutes, ordinances, and laws of God, of which there is no recital by Moses. The intended sacrifice of Isaac is too well known to be commented upon. At Beersheba this prophet of the Lord planted a grove, and there "*called upon* the name of the Lord," doubtless at set times; and when he went away from these places, some persons, perhaps, who had been initiated into the priesthood, were left. At least I incline to this opinion, from Moses finding a priest accidentally in Midian, where some of Abraham's descendants are supposed to have settld; and we shall find this supposition confirmed, when we meet Moses

and Jethro together *. When Abraham dies, his son Isaac supplies his place; and at Gerah the Lord appeared to him; thus taking, in a marked manner, each eldest son in this line under his protection, so long as they deserved it. At Gerah, Isaac is promised peculiar blessings, not at first on his own account, but because "ABRAHAM OBEYED MY VOICE [the voice of the Lord], and KEPT MY COMMANDMENTS, MY STATUTES, AND MY LAWS." If it be thus only that Moses acknowledges firstlings, first-fruits, altars, tithes, *clean* beasts and fowls; and also a charge, commandments, statutes, and laws to have been in use, and consequently in force, and obeyed by Abraham; it is not too much to insert the observance of the Sabbath among them. And although Terah, Abraham's father, is said by Joshua to have served "other gods," it does not

* See Bishop Horne's remarks on this grove; also the bishop's three discourses on the garden of Eden, the tree of knowledge, and the tree of evil, which are founded upon the ancient historians.

follow that the institution of the Sabbath was not traditionally preserved and kept by some of the family.

At Beersheba, where Abraham planted a grove and called upon the name of the Lord, his son Isaac builds an altar, and does the same as his father did. The history of Isaac is very briefly given by Moses; but of Jacob, Isaac's second son, who supplanted his brother Esau, we have a more copious relation*. As Jacob was journeying from Beersheba, and proceeding toward Haran, "he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night." Having taken stones of that place for his pillows, he lay down, and went to sleep. Here he was visited with a dream; and such was the effect of it, that when he awoke his exclamation was "How dreadful is this place!"—[a spot where he had not feared in the evening to lie down to sleep]

* It was a well belonging to this Jacob, which was the honoured spot where our Lord was resting, when the woman of Samaria came to him, and held the conversation mentioned in St. John's gospel.

—"*this is none other but the house of God, and this the gate of Heaven.*" This place must have been previously assigned to worship. However this may be, Jacob builds an altar there, and consecrates it *by pouring oil thereon*, adding, "And this stone shall be God's house," Bethel, "*and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*" That Jacob should have vowed *tenths* unto the Lord by accident is very improbable; but hearing as we do of *firstlings, altars, tithes,* &c., it is manifest, that some religious rites, some law, were preserved in this posterity, of which we are not informed by Moses. The remembrance of the Sabbath is likely to have gone hand in hand with the history of the creation; and if from proverbial expressions we can glean any thing, that of Laban's to his brother, "Surely thou art my bone and my flesh," which corresponds with Adam's "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh," affords the presumption, that the history of the creation was still perfectly alive.

I have said Laban's brother; see Genesis xxix,

10—15; though he was in fact his nephew. We find Laban saying also to Jacob, "Fulfil her *week*," &c.; which word, as used in Genesis, is likewise used for the same purpose by Josephus and others; and except *Sabbata*, there is no other word in the Hebrew which could express it. Balak, king of Moab, prepared seven altars, &c., at Balaam's command. Now Moses did not write his book till about the year of the world two thousand four hundred at the earliest; yet we find him attributing these expressions at this time to these idolaters. If we add, that the seventh day among the Gentiles was a sacred day, as has been proved over and over again; and if it be true, that the Gentiles abhorred the customs of the children of Israel, it follows they did not borrow the observance of a seventh day from them, but derived it from some other origin. This must have been the institution of the Sabbath after the creation, which, amid the dispersion of mankind, and their idolatry, still remained traditionally sacred; for the confusion of languages at Babel would prevent all inter-

course among the nations, for a considerable time at least*.

At or near Shechem, where Abraham had built an altar formerly, Jacob builds another; and that these altars were for the observance of religion, is to be understood by the direction, which the Lord gave to Jacob after the slaughter of Shechem and Hamor. "Arise," saith the Lord, "go up to *Bethel*, and DWELL THERE; and make there *an altar unto God*, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother:" and here it was that Jacob called the place the house of God, and vowed to pay the tenths. When God directed this altar, the last of those of which we have any account in Genesis, to be raised, it was erected for one purpose only, that of sacrifice and worship. We cannot suppose the Lord could have any other design in it; all the intercourse

* Concerning this day among the gentiles, the reader may see what is said in Hesiod, Homer, Callimachus, Linus, Theophilus Antiochenus, Tibullus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Philo, Dion Cassius, Philostratus, and others.

of the Deity with man related in the Scripture tending invariably to this end. Now it is a remarkable fact, that when Jacob and his family stole away from Laban, and Laban went after them, he *overtook them on the* SEVENTH *day, and found them* RESTING *on a certain hill: and then indeed he did not meddle with them, for it was eventide.* This circumstance strongly supports the patriarchal observance of the Sabbath.

On this part of the subject we have afterward but a very glimmering light, and this disappears for several years. Jacob offered many sacrifices, which are described by Moses; and one when, his son Joseph being discovered in Egypt, he was about to go to him: but in what the sacrifice consisted is not stated by the sacred historian, or whether prayers were offered up to the Deity at the same time.

We must now come to the period of Jacob's death, which took place in the presence of his son Joseph, of whom he requested, that he would bury him *in the place which had been purchased for their*

family burial ground, in Machpelah. The death of Jacob altogether carries with it something very favourable to the belief, that the Sabbath was still observed in his son Joseph's days. For, when going in state to bury his father, Joseph, having arrived at Atad, distant from Hebron but fifty miles, *where Abraham built an altar*, halted with his company, and mourned *seven days*. After this the mourning was continued, and lasted in the whole ten weeks. It is not in my power to state on what day of the week this ceremony began; but the mourning seven days at Atad, and its continuing ten weeks, or seventy days, give a very fair presumption that it ended on the Sabbath. And when Jacob, who was also called Israel, was upon his death-bed, and about to pronounce in a solemn manner his blessing upon Joseph, it was done in terms evidently allusive to the observance of some sacred law. Jacob said, "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac *did walk;* the God which fed me all my life long unto this day——"

The light, that has hitherto assisted me in sketching out the circumstantial evidence of a First Law having been given, and of the observance of the Sabbath being kept up till Joseph's death, has now vanished. Joseph having returned into Egypt, "*died, and all* HIS BRETHREN, *and* ALL THAT GENERATION." From this time, it is my belief, the observance of the Sabbath was discontinued; and the sacred law, the true religion, was lost and swallowed up in the anarchy that existed among Jacob's posterity by Leah. What time elapsed from this event to the birth of Moses is not to be ascertained exactly; but it must have been a considerable period, for about the time of Joseph's death the descendants of Jacob, who came into Egypt, were but "seventy souls" according to Moses. After that time "the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them." The Pharaoh also who was alive in Joseph's time was dead, and "there arose a new king over Egypt, which knew

not Joseph." This king threw the Israelites into bondage, and placed task-masters over them, and "made them serve with rigour," rendering "their lives bitter with hard bondage," and "all manner of service in the field."

In this state were the Israelites till the birth of Moses; who, when he was grown up, had occasion to flee into Midian. During the time he was in this country, that king of Egypt died, and another was reigning in his stead when Moses returned into Egypt. In this long period of bondage, we read of no altars being raised, no sacrifices among the Israelites, no firstlings, no tithes, no tenths, no religion whatever; nothing in the shape of commandments, statutes, laws; no high priest; not a whisper of any thing of the kind is heard, as though it had never existed, or had expired in a moment. True it is, there was a voice among the people heard in groans arising from their bondage; but no prayers, no sacrifice, no mediator with the Deity appearing at their head to seek from Heaven that protection, which in the day long gone by

had been experienced by their forefathers. From the history Moses gives us we have good reason to presume, that every religious ordinance observed in the time of Joseph was suppressed after his death, and in a short time forgotten by many. It appears, that, when Moses was called, the Israelites were destitute of a head or chief among them, and had discontinued the worship of the true God. Moses, having slain an Egyptian, is induced, apparently by his dread of the king's displeasure, to hurry away into the land of Midian. Having come thither, as he was sitting by a well, who should come to draw water—an honourable employment in those days—but the daughters of a PRIEST of MIDIAN. Water being scarce in that country, great struggles often occurred between the parties resorting to the well, as to who should be first supplied, lest the water by continual exhaustion should fail, before they and their flocks could all be refreshed. At this time some shepherds with their flocks came, and attempted to drive away those of the father of these young women;

but Moses, watching what they were about, immediately "stood up and helped" the daughters, and watered their flocks for them. No sooner was this done, and they no doubt had gratefully acknowledged the assistance Moses rendered them, than they returned home immediately. Their father Jethro, as he is generally called, surprised by their arrival somewhat earlier than usual, inquired into the cause of it. To which they answered, "An *Egyptian*" (mistaking Moses so to be from his dress) "delivered us out of the hands of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock." When the good old man heard this, he said to his daughters, who were seven in number, "Where is he? Why is it that ye have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread." So the daughters went, and invited Moses, according to their father's desire, to come home with them. Moses, complying with their request, went to their father's dwelling; continued to live with them; and in due time was found

worthy of a union in marriage with one of the daughters of the priest of Midian.

Let us seat ourselves within the habitation of this family at this time, and we must naturally imagine, that we hear Moses relating the cause of his departure from Egypt into Midian, and telling them the bondage into which his brethren were thrown, and many other particulars relative to the children of Israel. In return, this priest would recount all that he had formerly learnt concerning them; and thus, when Moses came to write his history of this people, he would partly found it upon the information he had received from Jethro, if he had no other source, which there is reason to believe he had. That Jethro was a priest of the religion of Jacob is seen in his last meeting with Moses some time after the call of the latter. Moses, being appointed by his father-in-law to take care of his flocks, led them onwards till he came to the farther end of the Desert, and found himself at the foot of Horeb, one of the peaks of

mount Sinai. Here it pleased God to call Moses; and, having called him, the Lord said, "Now, therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is *come unto me*; and I have also seen* the oppression, wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will *send thee* unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And the Lord said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you;

* Not presented by any mediator; though in all other cases, in any period of the history, either Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Moses, stood forward as the advocate of Israel with the Lord.

and they shall say to me, what is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM that I AM; and He said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And they shall hearken to thy voice, and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and you shall say unto him, the Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us; and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God."

This is the manner in which Moses has related his own call; and from it he appears to have been at that time almost a stranger to the true religion of his ancestors, by requiring such explicit directions. After the promise that he shall be aided by supernatural powers, when from his want of eloquence he is still distrustful as to the effect his mission will produce, the Lord seems to appeal to him, as if he knew *the history of the creation*, and says, "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing or the

blind? Have not I the Lord?" But again the insufficiency of Moses's knowledge in the first law is manifest in the circumstance which follows, or else he was aware a new law was about to be given. When Pharaoh after successive plagues had granted Moses leave to go into the wilderness to sacrifice unto the Lord, he scruples about granting him any flocks or cattle. "And Pharaoh called unto Moses and said, Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed; let your little ones also go with you. *And Moses said*, Thou must give us also sacrifice and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. *Our cattle* also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and *we know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come thither.*" Soon after this happened, the Passover was instituted; the Mosaic Law succeeded closely to it; and although Moses might have learnt the intention of burnt-offerings from Jethro and other sources; yet certainly his deficiency of knowledge

in matters relative to serving the Lord shows, that the first law was publicly extinct in the bondage, notwithstanding it might be observed in some scattered or private families; and that it was an entire reinstitution of the Sacred Law, which was about to take place.

That no high priest was now among the Israelites is gathered likewise from an answer of Moses to the Lord, where he says, "But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto thee." Upon this appeal the promise of miraculous powers is made to him. Now if the Israelites had not been so unfortunate in their bondage, as to have been deprived of the Providence that watched over the generations of their fathers until the extinction of that of Joseph, and with Joseph's family that of the divine law and priesthood, Moses would never have hesitated to enter upon his mission. He would have been aware, had their situation been otherwise, that their minds would have been ready to discern and own the power of

the Lord in the first miracle wrought by him. But from the frequent refusal by the Pharaohs to let the Israelites go and sacrifice to the Lord, even after many heavy plagues had been brought upon them, we must imagine, considering that for just reasons they could only sacrifice in the *wilderness*, that hitherto in this bondage they had been treated still more harshly, by having been wholly denied the observance of their religion for centuries before. The Israelites, therefore, when Moses was called by God, must have sunk into a state of infidelity and irreligion, if they had not completely fallen into Egyptian idolatry, which it would almost appear they had, from their conduct after the Passover. Moreover, the call of Moses was but the fulfilment of Joseph's prophecy: "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

Having mentioned the meeting of Jethro the priest of Midian and Moses, after the latter had been up in the mount before God, and after his

final appointment to be the promulgator of the law, as a fair proof that the father-in-law was acquainted with the True Religion extant in Abraham's time—which is corroborated by the fact, that Moses having neglected the token of the covenant, *his wife* (Jethro's daughter) *remembering it*, upon her journey from Midian into Egypt, caused her son to be sealed with it, as well as by other inferences—I shall proceed to the following remarks upon that interview.

After Moses had been called to the administration of the new law, he felt it to be his duty, as a good son-in-law, to return to his father's house, and take leave of those, among whom he had found an asylum when he fled from the face of one of the Pharaohs, before he entered upon his new occupation. It does not appear, that upon his arrival he made his father-in-law acquainted with all that had happened; but, expressing an earnest desire to go and visit his brethren in Egypt, Jethro consents to his departure, and he takes his wife and family with him. On this journey the circumstance re-

lative to the token of the covenant occurred. The wife of Moses tarried but a short time in Egypt, before she returned with her family to her father in Midian; and there related every thing, which she had learnt with respect to her husband and his call by the Almighty. This intelligence after a while induced the Midianitish priest, to visit his son-in-law in Egypt; and accordingly, taking with him the wife of Moses and her sons, he journeyed to Mount Sinai. Jethro having arrived there, "encamped at the mount of God:" and when Moses was informed of his arrival, he hastened to receive him. The account of this interview cannot be given in better language than that of the sacred historian. "And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him, and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent." Then Moses recounted what had taken place since his return the second time into Egypt, "what the Lord had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all that had come upon them by

the way, and how the Lord had delivered them." Upon hearing these matters Jethro was exceeding glad, and immediately exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord:" and he (Jethro) "took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses's father-in-law *before God*."

Observe, that the burnt-offering and the sacrifices are taken by *Jethro;* and Aaron the high priest, and the elders, are called to eat bread *before God.* The expression, *before God,* implies more than an ordinary feast among friends, as also does that of the "burnt-offering and sacrifices." May it not be inferred then, that these elders were those, who were appointed priests after the giving of the law, those who were appointed being Levites? and that this "bread" was of the nature of the show-bread, of which in after-times we know it was not lawful for any to partake, except the priests? But if we may draw this inference, Jethro, the priest, was a priest of the religion of Abraham, and of course the true religion. Jethro, however, did more

than this one act in manifestation of his priesthood; for he ventured to give Moses directions, which were accepted by him, as to the future regulation of the affairs of government in the camp of Israel. When Jethro saw the burden of this government of the Israelites would be too great for his son-in-law, he said: "The thing that thou dost is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people that is with thee, for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, *and God shall be with thee:* Be thou for the people to Godward, that thou mayst bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them *ordinances* and laws, and the work that they must do. Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, *such as fear God,* men of truth, hating covetousness [corruption]; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that

every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge; so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so [*i. e.* Deo favente], then thou shalt be able to endure, and all *this people shall also go to their place in peace.* So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, *and did all that he had said.*"

If Jethro had been any other than a descendant of Abraham, and a priest in his religion, would Moses, after his heavenly call, have listened to his instructions, or have obeyed them as implicitly as he did? How Jethro, who seemingly by accident became acquainted with Moses, was informed of the token of the covenant, for his daughter Zipporah knew it; how he ventured to exclaim, "Blessed be THE LORD, who is greater than all gods!" how he knew the use of burnt-offerings and *sacrifices* in the service of God; how the elders came in state with Aaron, and assisted him before the Lord; how Jethro came to speak of ordinances

and laws, of the fear of God, of the way in which that people should walk who hitherto in their bondage had sitten in darkness, and what service they should perform; how he should know in what manner to plan the future government of the Israelites; how he was capable of saying and doing all these things; it is not easy to decide, unless he had traditionally received the first law, and the priesthood, from Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. But, on the other hand, in these very acts, the whole of this transaction tacitly proclaims a First Law to have been given.

We are now arrived at the promised conclusion. It has not been directly asserted, that the Sabbath was observed during the two thousand years; nor does it now signify whether it were or not, except as a subject of very interesting inquiry: and in this respect, I trust, I have adduced strong indications of the probability that it was kept up till Joseph's death, and then left unobserved in the period between this event and the birth of Moses, soon after which a new reckoning of the day itself

commenced, if it were ever lost, and its strict observance enjoined as indispensably requisite to the continuance of a holy life, and of religion.

But beyond what has already been proposed towards proving the antiquity of the Sabbath, I must add some observations made by others, which meet a few arguments that have been brought against the institution of the Sabbath altogether; for they are as applicable to it after the time of Moses as before.

" His work was performed in six successive days, and the seventh was proclaimed an eternal Sabbath. This division of time into seven parts does not imply, that God possessed not the power of calling his works into immediate existence, but it affords a striking example of the WISDOM, STRENGTH and BEAUTY resulting from a methodical arrangement of time and labour; and to impress on his creatures the propriety and necessity of apportioning one seventh part of their time to the purposes of rest and devotion. Hence in the sacred compacts between God and man, the se-

venth day was uniformly appointed to be kept holy, because a public and external worship being instituted, a certain and specified time was necessary for its performance, ' and in the *Mosaic dispensation* the seventh year was a year of rest; and each climacteric, or the recurrence of seven times seven years, was celebrated by a solemn jubilee to the Lord.' On this account some have thought it was the seventh part of time only that was consecrated by the Sabbath: but it is observed, that the order in which the Sabbath is introduced at the creation, in numbering days and forming a week, shows, that it was the last day of the *week* only; and the reason of its consecration can be assigned to no other. The consecration of the seventh part of time only follows indirectly, and as a necessary consequence of the institution: it is not the subject of the institution itself, nor renders it a matter of indifference which day of the week is kept, nor gives a latitude to man to transfer the weekly Sabbath from the seventh or last day of the week to some other. We do not

consider the Lord's Day to signify no more than the seventh part of time; and why therefore should we suppose so concerning the original Sabbath? Were the first seventh day alone intended to be kept holy, and not its weekly return also, it would not be the day itself that was sanctified, but a certain day of a month that in a certain year fell on the last day of the first week. But this notion is abundantly refuted by the observance of the Sabbath amongst the Jews.

"Nor does another objection appear to be better founded, that is raised against the credibility of the seventh day's having been enjoined upon the first human pair and their posterity, on account of the day's not happening during the same period of absolute time, under meridians considerably remote from the spot about which Paradise is usually supposed to have been situate, and from each other—as also on account of the peculiar circumstances attending the inhabitants of the polar regions. I am surprised, that any one, who professes to advocate the cause of the first day, should

bring forward an objection to the divine institution of the seventh day, which, if solid, must have equally prevented the institution of the first day, and indeed of any day. But it strikes me, that the inference to be drawn from the circumstances mentioned in the objection is,—not that the words under consideration do not contain a precept, when they so manifestly appear to contain one,—or that they do not mean what they cannot but mean, if there be any meaning in language,—or that mankind at the beginning did not think the precept binding upon them, when they knew nothing, any more than the common people do at this day, that should, in consequence of the progress now made in the study of geography and astronomy, make them think otherwise; but that the facts, now they are discovered, form no material obstacle to it. The assumption wants proof, that the Divine Being would not order mankind to keep a particular day, because the day would commence and terminate sooner or later in some countries than in others. The circumstance does not prevent his

Majesty from ordering his birthday to be kept in the East and West Indies on the same day on which it is kept in England, or a bill drawn upon a resident in a country situate under a distant meridian from being paid the day on which it becomes due. Why, then, should it prevent the institution in question on the part of the Divine Being? It does not indeed follow, that God would do so, because man acts in this manner: but it follows, that his doing so is not impossible; and that there is no reason for interpreting Gen. ii. 2, 3, in a way different from the natural import of the words, on such a ground*.

"With respect to the great mass of places and persons, the objection in question is futile. One weekly Sabbath could not differ from another in absolute time more than twelve hours at furthest; and in the generality of cases the difference would

* The meridian of Jerusalem is not the same with that of Sinai; yet the Fourth Commandment required the Jews to keep the seventh day in the former place, as well as in the latter.

not amount to a couple of hours, if so much. They differed scarcely any thing, till emigrations took place East or West from the neighbourhood of Paradise before the Flood, and from mount Ararat after the Flood. Even when these emigrations did take place, the differences were inconsiderable, till the removals were to very remote distances. If it be asked, what was to be done by the emigrants relative to the day for the Sabbath, whenever that should return, I answer, even that which has always been done, and still is done, by the moderns in such a case—namely, to call that the evening of what we now call the sixth day, (and if any of them did not know which was the sixth day, through losing their reckoning after setting out, that was their fault,) when darkness commenced at the place where they were. This would be the beginning of the Sabbath, and the end of it would be the commencement of darkness on the day following. The interval would be their seventh day now, according to the course of nature and providence, however it might differ

less or more in time from the one they left behind them.

" What the ancients actually did in the case of emigrating with respect to their computation of time, no one can now tell. But I may venture to affirm, I believe, that the moderns have acted, and still act, in substance, as just stated, altering their timepieces according to the meridian of their new residences. The Jews and the Christians, in keeping their respective weekly Sabbaths in this country, do not keep precisely the weekly returns of the same days, which their forefathers or predecessors kept, and which they themselves would now keep were they in Asia. Yet regardless of the difference, and most of them totally ignorant of it, they both think, that they each keep the same days in succession, which the professors of their respective religions kept in the East many centuries ago. And so they do, so far as the course of nature and providence allows them. Nor do they either of them imagine, or have they cause to imagine, that the foreknowledge of such

a circumstance on the part of the Deity rendered it impossible for him, to fix or to continue a particular day for the weekly Sabbath; or that they, having become acquainted with it, are now at liberty to exchange it for any other day, that fashion or interest may recommend.

" The people of Europe, and those of America, frequently remove their residences from the one to the other, without ever thinking, that in consequence of these changes they do not sanctify the same day weekly, that they used to sanctify; nor are they thought to keep a different one by others, notwithstanding the fact, that in such cases the former begin their Sabbath some hours later, and the latter some hours earlier, than they did before. Travellers to a distance East or West, whether by sea or land, alter their timepieces, as was said before, to the hour of the place where they happen to be, whenever there is occasion, and reverse the alteration on their return, or in the course of returning, without ever supposing, that such changes can or ought to interfere with their fixing on or

adhering to particular days agreed on with those left behind them for transacting important business."

"Another objection has been taken against the Deity's having appointed a particular day to be observed by mankind in general, from the present natural, and from the artificial modes of computing time, both ancient and modern. It is imagined, that the first three days not having been measured by the absence and the presence of the Sun, as every day has been measured since, no seventh day subsequent to the first has a right to sanctification, on the ground of being its proper representative; not happening after a portion of time equal to that, after which the first seventh day happened, but after a space of time that was either longer or shorter. It is likewise imagined, that all mankind cannot sanctify the return of the day which was the seventh day in Paradise, because some of them reckoning the beginning of their days, not from the beginning of darkness, but from either the noon before, or the

midnight after, their seventh days commenced neither with that particular day nor with each other. I shall have occasion to discuss these objections more fully when I come to consider the question concerning the commencement of the weekly Sabbath according to Scripture. It is replied to this objection, that there is no proof of the first three days of the first week being respectively different in length from the four days that followed them. The Deity knew when the twenty-fours were completed, as well without as with the Sun, and therefore could make them precisely of the same length as the others. It appears that he did so, by the sacred historian calling the first three *days*, as well as the four last, without noticing that the word was used in different senses. Consequently the first week did not differ in length from any one that followed.

" As to the other objection, I reply, that men knew, at the beginning, that the commencement of darkness was the original sign of a new day's commencing, and that the commencement of the

weekly Sabbath was signified by the same sign as the commencement of any other day. They were able, and it was their duty, in their emigrations, to preserve the knowledge of the day, be it which of the seven it might, and likewise of the sign when a new day commenced. However lawful it might be for them to alter the commencement of the six working days, it does not appear that they were under any necessity, or that they had any authority, to alter the commencement of the seventh day Sabbath. If any of the nations, through their own fault, or that of their ancestors, lost their reckoning, they were able to recover it by means of the Jews, among whom the knowledge of the true seventh day has always been preserved."

" Before we close the evidence of the observation of the weekly return of that seventh day on which the Divine Being rested, I must briefly notice the objection made to it by some, on account of the miracle recorded in the book of Joshua of the Sun's standing still a whole day, which they suppose to have transferred the former seventh day

to a different day. This by no means necessarily follows. Suppose the miracle to have happened at three o'clock in the afternoon on a Tuesday: when it ceased on Wednesday afternoon at the same time, there was no necessity for calling the day Tuesday instead of Wednesday, since, according to the sacred narrative, it was known how long the miracle lasted. Nor was it called otherwise than by its proper name [Wednesday], as appears from the reason assigned in the Fourth Commandment for the enactment of the seventh day Sabbath continuing unaltered: for the reason would have ceased to be applicable, had the former seventh day now been called the sixth, and consequently the Sabbath not been kept till the day after*."

A modern divine, of celebrity as a popular preacher, says, "It is a branch of the law of nature, sanctioned by the conscience of every good man, and disowned by none but a few of reprobate character, whose opinion has no right to have

* Burnside's Remarks on the Sabbath.

any influence with virtuous men—that some appropriate seasons of that time which our Creator has bestowed upon us; some days of those many which he suffers us to live; should be devoted to his more immediate service and adoration.

"I am aware, *that the Law of Nature is a term of very strong import; and far be it from us to suppose, that the obligation of this law can in any way interfere with the precepts of the Christian code;* but I conceive that Nature herself holds out to us here an illustrious evidence in favour of the necessity and advantages of periodical and public worship.

"Valuing its evidence in this light, I appeal to yourselves, if we be not justified in considering the *Law of Nature* as the *reasonable preceptor* of this duty. FOR WHAT OTHER REASON CAN BE GIVEN than Nature's Law FOR THE CIRCUMSTANCE, which every reader of universal history is acquainted with,—THAT nowhere in the world has a nation been found without religious rites and ceremonies; no people when first discovered

so rude and barbarous, so illiterate and uncivilized, so approaching the ignorance and stupidity of the brute creation, as not to have places and seasons set apart and consecrated to their minds; in which places and seasons they acknowledge their dependence upon some superior cause, and pay prostrate offerings of devotional homage?"

This fact, even if ascertained, cannot warrant the belief, that the observance of the Sabbath is directed by any law of nature; its observance and its necessity can be sufficiently accounted for by other causes, and a different mode of reasoning, of a much stronger kind than any imaginary law of nature. So also a more satisfactory account of the origin of heathen worship can be given. As the above author has contrasted the mind of man with "the ignorance and stupidity of the brute creation," I must inquire, without undervaluing the faculties of mankind, whether, when we learn, that there are human beings justly called savages, and that these beings, notwithstanding their sense of some deity or other, do not hesitate to eat the

flesh of their fellow-creatures, whom the chance of war may throw within their grasp, or among themselves to offer as burning sacrifices human beings alive; they do not act as contrary to what we consider to be nature, as any creatures we can conceive: and when this brutality is not the effect of necessity, as the produce of the field in all manner of herbage, the animals upon it, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, are at their command, whether as great ignorance and stupidity do not exist in them as in the beasts of the field. Even "the young lions roaring after their prey do seek their food from God:" their wants are so supplied by Providence, that not even these will eat, though they may kill, each other. The brute creation display very visibly in their kind, in their extraordinary *instinct*, that the all powerful hand of God has amply adapted every thing to its purpose; and when those faculties, which are given either to man or beast, are exerted to their proper uses, stupidity and ignorance cannot justly be attributed to either. Indeed it evinces very bad

taste, to magnify one part of the creation at the expense of another; and it by no means follows, that the beasts of the field are stupid, because they have no place or season set apart for the worship of the Creator.

"Neither can this universal consent of mankind" (*concerning the being of God*), says Stillingfleet, "be enervated with any greater probability by those atheists, who assert the eternity of the world, and resolve this consent wholly into mere tradition, such as the fables of poets were conveyed in from one to another. For I demand concerning this tradition, whether ever it had any beginning or no? If it had no beginning, it could be no tradition; for that must run up to some persons from whom it first came: again, if it had no beginning, it was necessary, that it should always be, on the same accounts on which they make the world eternal. And if it be necessary, it must be antecedent to any free act of man's will, which tradition supposeth; and so some false opinion would be found to be as necessary as the world's

being eternal, and by consequence the world's being eternal may be a necessary false opinion; but if any false opinion be once granted necessary, it then follows that our faculties are not true, and that nature is a necessary cause of some notorious falsity, which is the highest impeachment the atheist could have laid upon his only adored nature; which must then have done that (which Aristotle was ashamed to think ever nature could be guilty of) which is something in vain; for to what purpose should man have rational faculties, if he be under an unavoidable necessity of being deceived? If then it be granted, that this tradition had once a beginning, either it began with human nature, or human nature did exist before it: if it began with mankind, then mankind had a beginning, and so the world was not eternal; if mankind did exist before this tradition, I then inquire in what time and by what means came this tradition first to be embraced, if it doth not suppose the existence of a Deity? Can any age be mentioned in history, wherein this tradition was

not universally received? And, which is most to our purpose, the farther we go back in history, the fuller the world was of deities, if we believe the heathen histories; but, however, no age can be instanced wherein this tradition began first to be believed in the world: we can trace the poetic fables to their true original, by the testimonies of those who believed them; we know the particular authors of them, and what course they took in divulging them; we find great diversities among themselves in the meaning of them, and many nations that never heard of them. But all things are quite otherwise in this tradition; we have none to fix on as the first authors of it; if the world were eternal, and the belief of a Deity fabulous, we cannot understand by what artifice a fabulous tradition could come to be so universally received in the world, that no nation of old could be instanced in by inquisitive philosophers, but however rude and barbarous it was, yet it owned a Deity. How could such a tradition be spread so far, but either by force or fraud? It could not

be by force, because embraced by an unanimous consent where no force at all had been used, and hath been so rooted in the very natures of those people who have been most tender of their liberties, that they have resented no indignity so highly, as any affronts they conceived to be offered to their gods." Orig. Sacr. p. 386, sect. 12.

I consider, therefore, the religion or worship of the heathens to have been entirely traditional; and, if it prove any thing, it is the truth of the Mosaic history, the history of man's creation, the revelation and institution of religion and of the Sabbath, and the general dispersion. Previous to the dispersion, we may presume, all men were aware of this institution, and some of them subsequently to it: and, notwithstanding idolatry and corrupt religion succeeded in after-times, when men were multiplied and scattered abroad upon the face of the Earth, it is not to be believed that all recollection of some worship due to the Unknown First Cause, who instituted it, would be entirely forgotten: but that, on the contrary, faint impres-

sions of a religious sense should be scattered also with mankind in their dispersion, remain with them, and be handed down to the latest posterity *.

Dr. Warburton says: "My question is, what could induce mankind to embrace these offered revelations, unless it were, first, either a consciousness, that they wanted a revealed will for the rule of their actions; or, secondly, an old tradition, that God had vouchsafed it to their forefathers?"— "If we turn to the few, the wise and learned among them, we shall find the case still more desperate. In religious matters they were blinder than the people; and in proportion as they were less conscious of their ignorance. The most advanced in the knowledge of human nature and its

* I beg the reader, whose pursuits may so incline him, to peruse attentively Bishop Sherlock's Discourses concerning Natural and Revealed Religion, Dr. Butler's Analogy, Bishop Marsh's Lectures, and a few works of the same character on this subject, which, in my opinion, clearly establish the fact, that religion is entirely a revelation.

dependencies were, without question, the ancient sages of Greece. Of these the wisest, and far the wisest, was Socrates: he said and confessed his ignorance, and deplored the want of a superior direction."—Div. Leg. b. 4. sec. 1.

From various remarks and considerations, which Mr. H. Horne has adduced, "we are authorised," he says, "to infer that a divine revelation is not only probable, but necessary. In fact, without such revelation the history of past ages has shown, that mere human reason *cannot* attain to any *certain* knowledge of the will or law of God, of the true happiness of man, or of a future state. To a *reflecting* and *observant* mind, the harmony, beauty, and wisdom of all the varied works of the creation are demonstrative evidence of a First Great Cause; and the continued preservation of all things in their order attests a divine and superintending Providence. But the ultimate design of God in all his works cannot be perfectly known by the mere light of nature: and consequently our knowledge of his preceptive will, or law, is

equally uncertain, so far as his works disclose it, or philosophy has discovered it." Such is the opinion of this gentleman: and he refers his reader on this point to several treatises, which "show satisfactorily, that religion and language *entered the world by divine revelation*, without the aid of which man had not been a rational or religious creature; that nothing can oblige the conscience but the revealed will of God; and that such a thing as the law of nature never existed, but in the human imagination *."

Bishop Horne, in his "Discourses," has an observation of the same kind. "The use and intent of names is to express the natures of the things named; and in the knowledge of these natures, at the beginning, God, who made them, must have been man's instructor. It is not likely, that, without such an instructor, men could ever have formed a language at all, since it is a task which requires much thought; and the great

* Vol. i. chap. i. p. 4.

masters of reasoning seem to be agreed, that without language we cannot think to any purpose." And the author of the "Analogy of Religion, natural and revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature," says: "Some persons, upon pretence of the sufficiency of the light of nature, avowedly reject all revelation, as in its very notion incredible, and what must be fictitious. Indeed it is certain no revelation would have been given, had the light of nature been sufficient in such a sense, as to render one not wanting and useless. But no man in seriousness and simplicity can think so, who considers the state of religion in the heathen world, before revelation," [or even after it,]-" and its present state in those places which have borrowed no light from it: particularly the doubtfulness of some of the greatest men concerning things of the utmost importance, as well as the *natural* inattention and ignorance of mankind in general. It is impossible to say, who would have been able to have reasoned out that whole system, which we call natural reli-

gion, in its genuine simplicity, clear of superstition; but there is certainly no ground to affirm, that the generality could. If they could, there is no sort of probability they would. Admitting there were, they would highly want a standing admonition to remind them of it, and inculcate it upon them."

Dr. Sherlock, in his 9th discourse, vol. 1. gives his opinion thus: "Certain it is from the history of all ages, both past and present, that men have erred grossly and universally in many principal points of natural religion. How then shall we ever trust ourselves in examining the dictates of nature, since the attempt has in all ages produced folly, ignorance, and superstition?" "Had the natural notion of the Deity been preserved entire and uncorrupted, no one form of the heathen worship could have stood before it: but they must all have dispersed, as the clouds fleet away before the sun."

All those who are acquainted with ancient history will readily fall into this belief, and concur in

the sentiments just offered. Consequently if, as Plutarch says, "you may find cities without wealth, without walls, without princes, but no man ever saw a city without a Deity, without a temple, without prayers," it yields a concentrating testimony (or that sort of undesigned proof which forms an ingredient in establishing it) to the truth of the history by Moses; and that man by the Almighty's own express command, at some period or other, was directed to and in the worship of Him. It was by no law of nature, that man worshipped God; nature, I fear, very early betrayed a contrary tendency, as in a later period among those who were witnesses of God's immediate providence.

In a work both entertaining and instructive, but of late much perverted in its design under a republication of it, the life of Buncle, I find the following note to some reflections on the worship paid to the sun, which was the earliest kind of idolatry. "When the tribes went off from Noah in Peleg's days, in the era of the Deluge 240, that

is, so many years after the flood, we must in reason suppose, that they had from the venerable *patriarch* a final and farewell relation of the *creation*, and the state of *innocency* and *the fall*; *the institution* of *worship*; and the hope of *acceptance* and the *promised seed*. We may believe they had, at going off, a distinct repetition of all *the capital articles of their faith*. They received a clear review of the facts and revelations which Adam and Noah had the knowledge of; and in a compend of every doctrine and duty, speculative and practical, especially the doctrine of *the being* of a *God, his unity*, and perfections, had a sufficient fund of universal knowledge to set up with in the world. This is natural behaviour in all good parents; and we may conclude, that the pious patriarch acted in this manner, when he sent his relations away. But this ORAL TRADITION was liable to a gradual declension, and sunk at last into a state of *evanescence*."

To this origin I attribute any signs of worship in heathen countries, and to no law of nature in

the people of them, so that we must ascertain more accurately the first introduction of the Sabbatical Institution.

These reflections induce me in this place to pay a tribute of admiration to an author, whose plan of writing and of thinking is much to be commended, and is well worthy of imitation, Mons. Rollin. His Ancient History was composed with the impression of the truth of the sacred history lying upon his mind, directing every opinion which he gave, and influencing his judgment; so that he has not rated too highly either the law of nature, or the light of reason, unassisted by revelation. The following quotation from him may be considered as leading me into a digression; but, as it supports a position I intend to maintain, which is repugnant to the opinions of some men, whose works are held up as authorities, I have deemed it a necessary support to my own judgment. "From ancient history we acquire, at the same time, another knowledge, which cannot but excite the attention of all persons, who have a taste and

inclination for polite learning; I mean the manner in which arts and sciences were invented, cultivated, and improved. We there discover, and trace as it were with the eye, *their origin and progress;* and perceive with admiration, that the nearer we approach those countries, which were once inhabited by the sons of Noah, in the greater perfection we find the arts and sciences; whereas, they seem to be either *neglected or forgotten, in proportion to the remoteness of nations from them;* so that, when men attempted to revive those arts and sciences, they were obliged to go back to the source whence they originally flowed."—But another object of infinitely greater importance claims our attention. For, although *profane history* treats only of nations, who had *imbibed* all the absurdities of a superstitious worship; and abandoned themselves to all the irregularities of which human nature, after the fall, became capable; it nevertheless proclaims universally the greatness of the Almighty, his power, his justness, and, above all, the admirable wisdom with which his

providence governs the universe. If the inherent conviction of this last truth raised, according to Cicero's observation, the Romans above all other nations; we may in like manner affirm, that nothing gives history a greater superiority to many other branches of literature, than to see in a manner imprinted, in almost every page of it, the precious footsteps and shining proofs of this great truth: viz. that God disposes all events as supreme Lord and Sovereign; that He alone determines the fate of kings, and duration of empires; and that he transfers the government of kingdoms from one nation to another *, because of the unrighteous dealings and wickedness committed therein. We discover this important truth in going back to the most remote antiquity, and *the origin of profane history;* I mean, *to the dispersion of the posterity of Noah,* into the several countries of the Earth where they settled. Liberty, chance, views of interest, a love for certain countries, and similar

* Eccl. x. 8.

motives, were, in outward appearance, the only causes of the different choice which men made in these various migrations. But the Scriptures inform us, that, amid the trouble and confusion that followed the sudden change in the language of Noah's descendants, God presided invisibly over all their counsels and deliberations; that nothing was transacted but by the Almighty's appointment; and that He alone guided and settled all mankind, agreeably to the dictates of his mercy and justice: '*the Lord scattered them abroad* from thence *upon the face of all the Earth.*' God has vouchsafed to discover to us, in holy Scripture, *a part of the relation of the several nations of the Earth to his own people;* and the little so discovered diffuses great light over the history of those nations, *of whom we shall have but a very imperfect idea, unless we have recourse to the inspired writers.*"

From the history of mankind we learn more strongly how erroneous it is, to ascribe heathen worship to the law of nature, or the light of

reason. St. Paul tells us, that the Egyptian sages deserved, on account of their pride and ingratitude, to be "given over to a reprobate mind;" and while they "professed themselves to be wise, they became fools; *and changed* the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things;" and Mons. Rollin adds, "to *show what man is when left to himself,* God permitted that very nation (the Egyptians), *which had carried* HUMAN WISDOM TO ITS GREATEST HEIGHT, to be the theatre in which the most ridiculous and absurd idolatry was acted." Moreover St. Paul says, "for it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, *the world by wisdom knew not God,* it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

These passages give but a very unfavourable notion either of the law of nature, or the light of reason; while the Sun having been the earliest object of idolatry, and so continued long, indicates an obscure recollection of the Shechinah, or Divine Glory, in which the Lord appeared to the fathers; and for which, as it sank into loose and uncertain tradition, the Sun and other luminaries at last became mistaken. To those with well disposed and regulated minds let me now address an admonition, which should make them careful as to how they reason upon the law of nature particularly, or upon the light of reason; since it is our duty to be guided by those Scriptures, the divine authenticity of which is supported by incontrovertible evidence, and in which undoubtedly the result of things that have not yet taken place is wrapped up.

In these last words I do not mean to advocate the doctrine of "necessity," as it is generally held; but that events are foretold in the gospel, which will occur, though not now, and against which it is in vain for man to direct his operations and

views. Dr. Warburton corresponds with me in this opinion, when he says in his dedication to the Jews, "if the *declared* punishment of Heaven on your nation, while you continue in unbelief, be dispersion through the world, without a civil policy of your own as a people, and without a country as particulars; and that your restoration to favour on your embracing the gospel is the being received into the church of Christ, and (as you can be received therein only as particulars and not as a nation) the being *incorporated* into the several civil communities of Christians; then, any attempt to incorporate you by *naturalization* into such civil communities, before the time predicted, and while you adhere to your old religion, as directly opposes the prophecies or the declared will of Heaven, as the attempt of Julian to rebuild your temple, after the sentence of the final destruction had been put in execution: because it aims to procure you a CIVIL CONDITION while Jews, which it is foretold you shall not enjoy till you are become Christians. Nor is it of any avail

to those politicians, who were concerned of late in your favour, to pretend, that Julian's attempt was with malice, and theirs with much integrity of heart: since this difference makes no change in the nature of the action as it respects God's dispensations, whatever it may be supposed to do, in the quality of it, as it respects the actors. In either case the declared will of Heaven is opposed. When it is done with the knowledge of the prophecy, and with intention to discredit it, the attempt is wicked and impious: when with a forgetfulness of it, with a disregard to religion, and a neglect of its interests, the attempt (even in the best way of putting it) is indecent and dishonourable. Not that he who thus conceives of things hath the least apprehension that PROPHECY can be dishonoured, or have its predictions defeated, by the civil power. But this he thinks, that a Christian state, while it enacts laws, though unwarily, whose operations combat the truth of those predictions, may very easily dishonour itself."

Now although it has been shown, that neither

the law of nature, nor the light of reason unassisted by revelation, taught the heathens any form of worship; but that it was derived from tradition, and supported by it from age to age, I have only to subjoin one final remark, that the obligation to observe the Sabbath is in no degree lessened by such means; but, on the contrary, since *we know* such worship was instituted by the Creator in the first instance, it becomes infinitely greater.—In respect of religious duties, even the Turks set a good example, for they "pray five times every day, and six times upon their Sabbath, viz. Friday; and always purify themselves by ablutions before they venture to enter into their moschs or churches."

PART II.

THE SECOND EPOCH FROM WHICH THE SABBATH IS TO BE DATED.

THE second epoch of the Sabbath is the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai; although, with others, I think it might be dated from the institution of the Passover. The reason of this latter supposition is, that from this period a new reckoning of time was to commence, and in about three months afterward we hear of the Sabbath as an ordinance instituted by God. There is no direct mention of its institution either at the Passover or at the falling of the manna: but, if it were not instituted at either of these periods, it must have been appointed before, and in all probability immediately after the Creation, and observed somehow and somewhere up to these

dates. It is supposed, that sooner or later the observance of the Sabbath was laid aside among the Israelites; but when the bondage in Egypt was on the point of termination, by the Almighty's express command a new reckoning of years, months, and days, was to be begun; and it is highly probable, Providence so ordered this event, that the old Sabbath was renewed in this arrangement. It does not follow, that, because a new year was commenced, it might not begin so as to make the new Sabbath coincide with the old. The change of the commencement of the year on this occasion, and the abrupt introduction of the Sabbath in the history given by Moses, tend greatly to support the opinion, that during the Bondage the original Sabbath instituted at the Creation was not lost, though both its public and private observance were prevented as much as possible by Pharaoh, and only renewed when the departure out of Egypt had occurred, and the Israelites had obtained full liberty "to go and sacrifice to the Lord their God," and to obey the

laws he had given them. Nevertheless, the conduct of the Israelites afterward appears to have been such, as to have required the promulgation of the Law afresh at Sinai, in which the Sabbath was introduced of course: and hence I prefer dating what is called the reinstitution of the Sabbath from this awful period. The instructions Moses and Aaron received fron God concerning the Sabbath were these:—"This month shall be to you *the beginning* of months; it shall be the *first month* of the *year* to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, in the *tenth* day of this month, they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house. And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it out from the sheep or the goats; and ye shall keep it until the *fourteenth*

day of the *same month;* and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in *the evening*. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door-post of the houses wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in *that night*, roast with fire, and unleavened bread, and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes upon your feet, and your staff in your hand: and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the LORD'S PASSOVER. For I will pass through the land of Egypt *this night*, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast: and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment; I AM the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are:

and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be to you for a memorial; and *ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.*

"Seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses; for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the *first day* until *the seventh day*, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

"And in the first day there shall be a *holy convocation*, and in the seventh day there shall be a *holy convocation* to you: *no manner of work shall be done in them*, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you. And YE SHALL OBSERVE THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD; for in this self-same day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt; THEREFORE shall ye observe this day [a Sabbath day] in your generations by an ordinance for ever.

" In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses : for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land." Exod. xii.

Hence we learn, that from the day on which this great event of the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage was shortly to occur, a new year, a new month, and a new week, were to begin. Now when the feast of unleavened bread was instituted, *a holy convocation being appointed* always to *take place on the* SEVENTH *day*, the sacrifice being fixed upon *the fourteenth*, and the feast of *unleavened bread* being to be continued until the one and twentieth day at even from the fourteenth, which would be the seventh again, these are signs of *the seventh day* being still marked in a peculiar manner; and indicate the observance of the weekly Sabbath, notwithstanding Moses has

not expressly said this. The lawgiver was intent, in this part of his history, upon relating the origin of the Passover, and the manner in which it should be kept; and, aware at the moment he was writing, that he should soon have to give a formal account of the final reinstitution of the seventh day for worship, he deemed it useless to mention what in this case he would have to repeat.

That Moses did write with *anticipation* in different instances is clear. Thus with respect to the *commandments, it cannot be denied,* that the ISRAELITES had received many, if not all of them, before the final awful promulgation of them from Mount Sinai; and although Moses *alludes* to them *before this event,* he neither tells us what they were, nor from whom they had received them, as will appear in the sequel. Such a method of writing shows the anticipation of his pen, and allows fair ground for the above inference to be drawn. He never gives the *history* of any facts twice over, though he frequently finds it necessary to mention them. If the instance of the Creation

be taken, which is the strongest that can be used, we find, that Moses tells no *second history* of it, but only alludes to it in a very brief recapitulation of the event; and then *because* it is connected with the primary institution of the Sabbath.

To this view of the subject I may add, no one can positively say, that when Moses was directed in the institution of the Passover, God, at the same time, did not reveal to him that at a set time He himself would finally establish the seventh day, on which the holy convocation was to be held, as the Sabbath, in a miraculous manner, if the Israelites failed to observe it after their deliverance. The lawgiver has almost acknowledged this to have been the case, when he goes so far as to own, that THE PURPOSE of the miraculous delivery of the commandments from Mount Sinai, and the Law afterward, was on account of the *disobedience* of the Israelites; that by *such means* they might be brought to see, hear, "*and believe him* [Moses] *for ever;*" and only two *complete* months had elapsed from the institution of

the Passover to the delivery of the commandments.

We no sooner come to the fifteenth chapter of Exodus, than we find that some commandments and statutes had already been issued, of which we had no account before. After the overthrow of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, the Israelites went into the wilderness of Shur, where for three days they could find no drinkable water; "and the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: THERE he made for them *a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them.*" Concerning this passage in Exodus the commentators are not agreed; but, after having myself applied it to the observance of the Sabbath, I was fully confirmed in this opinion when I found, that by some of the Jews themselves it is considered *as relating "to the observation of the Sabbath,* and the duty of honouring parents." The

words carry the tone of a compact in them; and I do not doubt, that they arose out of the Israelites disregarding the Sabbath; or that the difficulties they had to encounter after their deliverance were laid upon them for the same reason; since the first act, done *formally* and *publicly* before the children of Israel by the Lord, is the reinstitution of the Sabbath, after *a series of trials to bring them into its observance, which did not succeed.* The verse following that above quoted carries the allusion to the Sabbath still farther: "And if thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and *wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments,* and keep all his *statutes;* I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have put upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord which healeth thee."

What these statutes and commandments were we do not decidedly learn, or when they were given; but I am of opinion they were of the same kind as those subsequently delivered from Mount

Sinai. Let us proceed, and we shall find ourselves approaching a very interesting period in the journeyings of the Israelites, wherein the discernment of Moses is very conspicuous, as well as the forbearance and mercy of the Almighty. The Israelites would surely enter into the compact Moses had just made, and their obedience and gratitude are very shortly afterward put to the test. Onward then they are proceeding, and take "their journey from Elim," whither they had arrived from Shur; "and all the congregation of Israel came into the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the *fifteenth* day of the *seventh month after* their departing out of the land of Egypt." With the congregation of Israel we must rest at this spot, and pause a moment, to make one or two observations previous to the trial of their fidelity.

If two months had not yet wholly expired since the institution of the Passover, the new ecclesiastical year, the first month of it, and the first day of that month, none of these matters could be for-

gotten or confounded with any other by the children of Israel, who had been invited and encouraged at the waters of Marah to keep all the *commandments* of the Lord. Yet they were afterwards to *be proved* again; but failing in this trial, as we shall perceive they did, it became necessary, on account of the idolatry which was spreading over the face of the earth, to establish "*the statutes*, the commandments, the judgments, and the ordinances of the Lord" for ever, by some signal means; which was subsequently done at Sinai. Having come into the wilderness of Sin, "*the* whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness," on account of a scarcity of sustenance for them all. On this occasion the Lord said to Moses: "*I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out, and gather at a certain rate every day,* THAT I MAY PROVE THEM, WHETHER THEY WILL WALK IN MY LAW OR NOT." In these words, the will of the Lord is sent forth; *the test of obedience* and gra-

titude is pronounced; and the voice of the Lord is heard no more until the execution of this test. Hence it appears the Israelites must have been possessed of some law or other from God before the manna fell. They already had it, or the colloquies between the Lord and Moses could not bear the apparent understanding between them, that, the Israelites having at that time a law, this was to be the FINAL test of its observance by them. When the manna falls for the six days, but ceases to come down on the *seventh day*, it is both to prove whether the Israelites will walk in God's law, or attempt to transgress it; and at the same time to punish them by disappointment if they do. At last the manna has fallen, "and it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread [manna], two omers for one man: and all *the rulers of the congregation* came and told Moses: and he said unto them, This is that which the Lord *hath spoken;* to-morrow is THE REST of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord; bake that which ye will bake, to-day [the sixth day],

and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you, to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up until the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein."

It must be remembered, that no commandments whatever are mentioned, after the Lord had said the falling of the manna was to prove the Israelites. To this end, when it came to pass, in order that the congregation of Israel, though already apprised of it, might not at any time afterward urge the plea of misunderstanding or forgetfulness, Moses the day before declared to them and warned them, that the Sabbath, of which the Lord had spoken, was then at hand. The morning of the Sabbath comes, and Moses bids them "*Eat that to-day*" which they had provided on the sixth day, "for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord." But, contrary to this plain and direct intelligence, "it came to pass, there went out some of the people on *the seventh day*, for to gather, and they found none;" which shows how requisite the precaution

of Moses was, in giving public notice of the Sabbath, both the day before, and also when it arrived.

Having been but two months out of a bondage in which they had been hardly treated, and all the duties of their religion suspended, these continual explicit notifications of Moses were indispensable. When Moses foretold them of the manna, and when the manna fell, he spoke of "the seventh day, which is the Sabbath," as a day of worship formerly instituted, and enjoined by God; and in this failure of the test put upon the children of Israel, how conspicuous is their obstinacy! When the Lord saw what some of the congregation of Israel had done, he called Moses, and said to him, as the leader of the people, "HOW LONG REFUSE YE *to keep my commandments and my laws?* See, for that the Lord *hath given* you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days;" to show you, that on the Sabbath you are

to do no manner of work, " save that every man must eat" that which he hath (or ought to have) provided.

Assuredly the expression, "*how long refuse ye?*' would not have been used, if this had been the *first time* of the Israelites breaking the Sabbath; and its being then used, certainly intimates, in a clear manner, that up to this period they had several times broken it. In this we find no fault with Moses, who is clearly exculpated by telling the people, on the very day, what they knew the Lord had ordained. During the long period of their bondage the Israelites were in such a state of anarchy, that, when they were rescued, it was scarcely to be expected any sudden and effectual change could be wrought in them by ordinary means. That they " polluted the Sabbath," the trouble brought upon them at the waters of Marah implies: and some passages from the Scriptures, which I shall shortly produce, will appear to favour this opinion; and that it was by the inflic-

tion of troubles on the Israelites after their release, an endeavour was made, to render them obedient to the Law when re-instituted.

A stronger illustration of the necessity of keeping holy the Sabbath day could not have been found, than in the falling of the manna; and when Moses is alluding, in the book of Deuteronomy, to this instance of God's interposition, he tells the people of Israel, "*and he humbled* thee, and suffered thee to hunger; and did not bring upon thee the diseases that were laid upon the Egyptians; which, to make his will known, and declare his power," he might have done; "but he fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know;" that in this lenient manner "he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live:" that is, the Lord is a God of Righteousness and Mercy, who, knowing the heart of man had become "corrupt and desperately wicked," foresaw the only method to stop

the growth and diffusion of his evil propensities was by establishing firmly a set day for his worship, which (as Dr. Rennel says in his Sermon upon Gaming) should be "*the bulwark of religion:*" for God, who hateth iniquity, hath declared, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," and therefore was the Sabbath given to keep him holy; which Sabbath, in the Lord's day, *if it be observed,* will surely bind the affections toward God, and in the end lead to everlasting life.

We are now approaching the third month from the time of the Israelites leaving Egypt.—After the failure of the Israelites in the test laid upon them by the falling of the manna in the wilderness of Sin, they had removed, by the last Sabbath in that second month, to Rephidim and Mount Horeb. There they could get no water to drink, probably on account of their continuing disobedient; for it will appear from what happened in the next week, that they could not have observed even the last Sabbath of that month.—"In *the third month,* when the children of Israel were gone

forth out of the land of Egypt, *the same day* came they into the wilderness of SINAI." That is, having passed in the mean time over much ground, they arrived on the first day of the third month in this wilderness. "For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the MOUNT." The congregation of the children of Israel were little aware, perhaps, why they were brought hither: otherwise they would have been in extreme consternation, well knowing how recently they had rebelled against the Lord, who had protected and delivered them.

Being assembled there, we shall see a bright example of the long-suffering and forgiveness of the Almighty, that a remnant, in his mercy, might be saved. Here, "Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel, 'Ye have seen

what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice INDEED, and *keep my covenant*, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.' These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words, which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, 'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.' And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, *that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever*.' And Moses told the words of the Lord unto the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their

clothes; and be ready against the third day, for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.'"

There is much solemnity and warmth of compassionate feeling in the manner, in which this final covenant is conveyed to the Israelites: and upon the face of it there is evidence, that the allusion in these words, "Now therefore, if ye *will obey my voice* INDEED, *and keep my covenant*," is to their having at intervals broken God's laws, and disregarded the Sabbath; because it is in no wise insinuated, that they omitted to celebrate the Passover. What indeed could give rise to this mode of expression in the delivering of the covenant, but some flagrant transgression? and what must this transgression have been? surely the violation of the Sabbath; for the re-institution of the Sabbath was among the *first* things that took place on the third day. In this enunciation by Moses the Israelites are reminded, that they have already provoked the anger of the Lord too often; that now for the last time their disobedience shall

be forgiven, but upon conditions, which are called a covenant, and to be lasting as well as conclusive, that they shall obey the voice of the Lord their God, and fulfil the terms entered into with them.

Against the mercy of their God they could make no complaint. They ought to have been most grateful for the Lord's affording them so easy an opportunity of retrieving their sins. But in the time to come they are to be indulged with no more trials, things are to take their course, for their transgressions they are to suffer; the Sabbath-breaker is to be stoned to death.

Before I come to the third day, and the giving of this covenant, I shall remark, that the injunction to Moses to sanctify the people upon the occasion shows, either that Jethro, who came from a spot where Abraham's descendants had settled, instructed his son-in-law in the religion of his ancestors; or, when the Passover was instituted, Moses had more explicit directions from the Lord, than he has thought it necessary to introduce into

his history: and this makes it more evident, that in this part of his work Moses had but one sole object in view, and adapted his narrative to it in that way only, which was requisite for *his purpose*.

Finally, after many trials by various afflictions, and having failed in the last that was given to them, God determined, that the DECALOGUE and the LAW should be issued forthwith; and certain punishments be annexed to their transgressions, to which no indulgence should be allowed. As they were journeying to Sinai, the unexpected flowing of the water from the rock at Horeb reminded them on their way, that they were still in the power of the Lord; and on the third day after they had arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai, God descended in a cloud upon the *mount*, according to the notice given, that the commandments, or covenants, and the Law, might be delivered to Moses.

"And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a fur-

nace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount; and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount, and Moses went up."—"And God spake all these words," namely the Ten Commandments, the fourth of which is: "REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

In this manner was the final re-institution of the Sabbath promulgated; and thence it clearly

appears, that the falling of the manna was only a decisive trial of the fidelity and resolution of the Israelites: a last trial given them, after their release from bondage, and declared to be on purpose to prove, whether they would walk IN GOD'S LAW OR NOT. It was necessary to come to some determination in the matter, because henceforth they were to be looked upon by the rest of the world as the peculiar people of God, and must therefore be rigidly strict in their duties to the Deity, lest, by their continued violation of his laws with impunity, they should bring true religion into contempt, and multiply wickedness and idolatry. And it is evident, that immediately after the Creation the Sabbath must have been appointed, as Moses has recorded the *origin* of it, upon the occasion of the Creation being completed, and the Almighty's ceasing on the seventh day to proceed farther in his great work. Thus, there can be no doubt, that its observance was enjoined by a positive law in the beginning of the

world; but as it had fallen into disuse, it was necessary when a new reckoning of the year was to be commenced, to establish it anew under the administration of Moses, from which time forward it was unremittingly observed.

PART III.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SABBATH.

THE Christian institution having in an extraordinary and peculiar manner succeeded that established by the Almighty under the administration of Moses, is a sufficient reason to treat the Sabbath of the latter with great attention: to say nothing of its antiquity and original design.

I have thought it necessary, therefore, to write concerning the purpose of the Sabbath when first appointed after the Creation, as the purpose in the days of Moses was the same; and because that Sabbath, having been sanctified by God himself, and commanded to be kept holy in religious occupations, was preparatory to the devout observance of the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath.

According to Mons. Beausobre, "*the Sabbath is a festival instituted by the Almighty, in com-*

memoration of the creation of the world, which was finished on the sixth day; as appears from the book of Genesis, and also from the law, wherein it is said, that in six days God made Heaven and Earth, and rested on the seventh day. This institution was appointed chiefly for the two following reasons: first, to keep in men's minds the remembrance of *the creation of the world, and thereby to prevent idolatry* and the worshipping of creatures, by setting this day apart for the service of the Creator of all things; and, secondly, to give to man and beast one day of respite and rest every week. Beside these two general uses, the Sabbath was established for a more particular end with regard to the children of Israel, namely, to celebrate the memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, as we find it expressly recorded in the book of Deuteronomy: 'And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep

the Sabbath day.'—Hence the Sabbath is called in scripture *a sign* between God and the Israelites.

" This hath given rise to a question which hath much exercised the learned world, whether the Sabbath were appointed from the beginning of the world, and only renewed after the coming of the Hebrews out of Egypt; or whether it were a ceremony instituted with respect to the children of Israel, to turn them from idolatry, by putting them in mind of their Creator or Deliverer; in a word, whether the Sabbath be a *mere ceremonial institution, or a universal law binding on all mankind.*"

As we have seen the probability of the Sabbath having been observed until Joseph's death, and then fallen into disuse, in a former division of this work; and that its institution in the law of Moses was only a necessary renewal; it is next to be demonstrated, that the observance of the Sabbath was not a mere ceremony, but a positive law, intended to keep alive the remembrance of the

Creation, and the duty owing from man to his Creator. Before proceeding directly to this point, however, it is proper, that I should give the grounds, upon which some persons build the supposition, that it was a mere ceremony, to satisfy the reader, that I am not inclined to withhold any arguments militating against my own opinion.

Mons. Beausobre says: "The sacred writings never represent the Sabbath otherwise than a sign between God and the children of Israel, as a privilege peculiar to that nation, as a rest which God had granted them, and a festival whereby they were distinguished from the rest of the world. 'Consider,' says Moses to the Israelites, 'that God hath given you the Sabbath, or rest;' and in another place, 'My Sabbath shall you keep, for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who hath sanctified you,' that is, separated you from the rest of mankind. Nehemiah speaks of the Sabbath as of a particular favour, which God

had granted the Israelites; and places the ordinance relating to it among those other laws, which he had given them by the hand of Moses. In the prophet Ezekiel the Sabbath is ranked among the special mercies, which God had vouchsafed his people, and the marks of distinction, with which he had been pleased to honour them. Accordingly the most ancient writers have spoken of it under no other view. Philo expressly ranks the Sabbath among the laws of Moses; and when, in another place, he calls it the feast, not of one people or country alone, but of the whole universe, it is plain he there speaks figuratively. Josephus also mentions it always as a ceremony peculiar to the Jews, and styles it the law of their country. The ancient fathers of the Church had the same notion of this matter. Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, tells him, that the Sabbath was given to the Jews on account of their transgressions, and for the hardness of their heart; and Theodoret says, that the observance of the Sabbath was enjoined them with design to distinguish

them from all the other nations of the world. The Jewish doctors are of the same opinion, telling us, that their countrymen were so strict observers of the Sabbath, they would not even allow the *proselytes of the gate* to celebrate it with the same ceremonies as themselves, because they were not circumcised. The keeping of the Sabbath was attended with such circumstances, as plainly show, that it was a ceremonial institution peculiar to one people, and not a universal law given from the beginning of the world; as appears from their superstitious exactness in not doing any manner of work, for the space of four and twenty hours, and this under pain of death. Reason itself will teach us, that one day is not more holy in the sight of God than another; and that idleness in itself cannot be acceptable to him. This law must therefore have had for its object a people considered under some particular ideas. The Israelites were just come out of Egypt, where not only the *stars*, but also men, animals, plants, and all creatures in general, were looked upon as deities, and

had divine worship paid to them*. Now it was necessary there should be a day set apart, to keep them in perpetual remembrance of the Creation; and none could be fitter for this purpose than the seventh, for the reason before alleged. Besides, they were come out of a country where they had been kept to drudgery and hard labour; and therefore it was but *just and reasonable*, that their rest on that day should be an everlasting memorial of the rest God had procured them, *and that it should be* WHOLLY *consecrated to his service.* It was a capital crime, to gather wood on the Sabbath day. The law did not inflict so severe a punishment upon other faults, that were much more grievous than this, because they might happen to be committed through inadvertence and infirmity. But it would have been an inexcusable ingratitude, a profanation, and even a very criminal impiety in the children of Israel, to break

* See Warburton on the Egyptian hieroglyphics, and the origin of animal worship, in his Divine Legation.—EDIT.

so easy a command, and rob God of one single moment of a day which he had reserved entirely to himself.

" Were all men and all nations in the world bound to observe the Sabbath, it would never have been abrogated, as it actually was; and the Christians ought to have kept it throughout all ages, as they at first did, *out of condescension to the Jews*. Besides, JESUS CHRIST would never have said of such an injunction as the Sabbath, that he was at liberty to observe it or not; that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. In his answer to the Pharisees, when they found fault with his disciples for plucking some ears of corn on the Sabbath day, these three particulars are to be observed. First, that he sets the Sabbath upon the same footing with the command, whereby all sorts of persons, except the priests, were forbidden to eat the show-bread. Secondly, that the service of JESUS CHRIST, who is the true temple of God, dispenses men from the observance of the Sabbath, and *drives it away*, to use the

Jewish expression. Thirdly, that by Jesus Christ's saying the Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, it is plain he looked upon it only as a ceremony appointed for the use of man; whereas mankind was made for the noble duties of *justice and holiness*, because *these do not depend upon institution*, but are enjoined by reason as well as Scripture. These reflections of JESUS CHRIST set the Sabbath in the same rank with the Jewish ceremonies. St. Paul also places the *Sabbath days* among those ceremonies, wherewith he would not have Christians think themselves bound, because they were a *shadow of things to come*."

In answer to these arguments I reply: when we take the scripture history as the basis for our judgment, we must use it, as far as we are able, so as to make one part consistent with another, and keep the narrative as connected as possible. Such was the intention of the sacred historian; and when he gave us the account of the Creation, he seems to have judged it needful, to give us also the history of the institution and original design

of the Sabbath day, which was fixed upon the seventh. This institution, Mons. Beausobre says, was established to commemorate the creation of the world; and, as it is said in the law, because "in six days the Lord made the Heaven and the Earth, and rested the seventh day." But Moses added, "*wherefore* God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it," to which Mons. Beausobre only once slightly *alludes*. Now if a day thus blessed and sanctified were not to be kept holy, what day in reason ought to be so? and would the lawgiver have mentioned this circumstance in the beginning of his history, if the Sabbath were not as needful in the first as in the succeeding ages? To tell us, that the institution of the Sabbath "was less needful in those early times, when the remembrance of the Creation was still fresh in men's minds; *and upon account of the long lives of the patriarchs might be preserved for several ages*, since they had been in a manner witnesses thereof; but the case was altered *when the remembrance of the Creation came to be worn out of men's minds*, and

they began to worship creatures;" is clearly erroneous. After the Fall, at least, the Sabbath became important and requisite, if it were not before; and that it was so in those early times, when the Creation was still fresh in the memory of man, the murder of Abel, the Deluge, and the Dispersion at Babel, loudly proclaim. If the Sabbath were at any time required to prevent idolatry and ungodliness, it was wanted, as it was instituted and observed, long before its renewal at Mount Sinai. The remembrance of the Creation did not preserve mankind from wickedness, as Eve's conduct demonstrates, and Cain's also: nor does it appear, that this remembrance was ever obliterated from the minds of the Israelites, although in their bondage they had discontinued the observance of the Sabbath, and in part commenced idolaters. To suppose any case where the necessity of a Sabbath on these accounts existed at one time more than another; for instance, after the bondage in Egypt, more than in the previous ages of the world; appears an absurdity, since we have found, that

idolatry had commenced long before the remembrance of the Creation could have been lost.

We must go back therefore to the history of the Creation, to ascertain the original design of the Sabbath. If we do this, it will appear, that the institution of the Sabbath was not an after-thought to draw away mankind from idolatry, but an *original design* to *preserve* them from falling into it. If the remembrance of the Creation were insufficient to influence men, or if it were *likely* it should be forgotten, it was essential, that one day should be set apart for the exercise of true religion from the beginning. This day was the seventh: and it could not be to commemorate the deliverance from Egyptian bondage at that time; but was to keep mankind from idolatry, "to celebrate the birthday of the world." Neither was it for the former purpose, that the renewal of its observance was commanded. It was to be anew dated perhaps from that grand event; but the Passover was instituted for the celebration of the deliverance of the Israelites, while the Sabbath was re-

newed for its original purpose. When with the Sabbath the Hebrews were reminded so often as they are of the coming out of bondage, it is certainly called to their attention only to remind them, that, out of gratitude to God for the signal event which the *Passover was to celebrate*, they ought to observe his ordinance of the Sabbath. But if their deliverance only were to be commemorated, succeeding ages would have had little cause or care to keep the Sabbath holy; since, having no concern in the event, they could not feel themselves under any particular obligation for it; while, if we look upon it as constituted for the worship of Him who created all things, for a purpose in which all ages, the past, the present, and the future are equally concerned, it appears a wise and salutary institution, and its purpose the most noble as well as the most useful.

To suppose the language of the fourth commandment to imply, that the Almighty was wearied by the exertion of his power, and therefore rested, is so irrational, I shall merely remark

upon it, that the commandment adduces the Almighty's cessation from doing any thing on that day merely as an example for us to follow; and it is most probable the Sabbath was then set apart for the same purpose as upon its renewal, the worship of the Creator during a universal cessation from labour.

Concerning Beausobre's connecting together the Sabbath and the deliverance out of Egypt some farther detail is requisite, to disentangle the celebration of one event from the commemoration of the other. For this purpose a previous explanation of an expression, that occurs in the giving of the commandments, will be found very satisfactory. They commence thus: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."—Then follow the first, second, and third commandments; after which comes the fourth, "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day." This is the reason, I believe, why some writers have considered the Sabbath as an institution partly to commemorate the

deliverance from bondage. But this deliverance having occurred only two months before the giving of the Law upon Mount Sinai, and the Passover having been already *instituted expressly to commemorate it*, and this without any mention of the Sabbath, it is improbable, that the Israelites could so soon have forgotten it, or be ignorant who the Lord was. The announcement, therefore, to them, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt," was in fact unnecessary. But the truth is, this expression must either be attributed to the style of writing in those days, as being a more dignified manner of beginning an extraordinary address, for it is frequently to be found in the addresses of princes to their people in those times: or, which I am inclined to prefer, the expression is used to signify unity and universality, when put by Moses as the words of the Lord. It was done to show, that there was but one and the same God; and that He only should be served: it was to prevent the Israelites, and it was very adequate and needful at that time,

from entertaining a notion, that various deities were interposing on their behalf wherever they went. This appears likely from similar expressions in Exodus, and in other books of Scripture. Thus, " I am God, *the God of thy fathers:*" and Pharaoh, speaking to Joseph, " I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand," &c.; " Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord:" " I am the Lord, that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees:" " I am the God of Bethel:" " See now that I, even I am He, and there is no God with me:" " I, even I," used by Deborah, also by Elijah, and in many other instances. These expressions were thought a more solemn mode of speech in the one case; or used to express the universality, omnipotence, and unity of the Lord in the other, and to prevent idolatry. This latter opinion will acquire much weight when it is recollected, that Dr. Henry, in his History of the Druids, accounts for the introduction of the worship of a plurality of gods in Britain to the following cause: " How long," he writes, " the se-

veral nations, who descended from Gomer, the son of Japhet, and in particular, the ancient Gauls and Britons, continued to worship the only living and true God, and at what time, or by what means, the adoration of a plurality of gods was introduced amongst them, it is impossible for us to discover with any certainty; though we have sufficient evidence, that this change had taken place before the beginning of our present period. *It is highly probable that this fatal innovation was introduced by slow degrees, proceeded from, and was promoted by,* the three following causes. The different names and attributes of the true God were mistaken for, and adored as, so many different divinities."—Warburton also says: "To understand the nature of the Jewish economy we must begin with this truth, to which every page of the five books of Moses is ready to bear witness, that the separation of the Israelites was in order to preserve the doctrine of the Unity amidst an idolatrous and polytheistic world."—D. L.

Having set aside all difficulty in the introduction

to the Commandments, if we begin them, as in the 20th chapter of Exodus, "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other Gods but me," and go on to the 10th and 11th verses, we shall read them thus: "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt do no manner of work—*for*," or BECAUSE, "in six days I it was who made the Heaven and the Earth, and rested the seventh day," for your example, that on this day you might pay the worship due to your Creator, "and therefore blessed and sanctified it." If, instead of this reading, we had found it written, "For in one night, I [God] saved the Israelites," &c., there would have been an end to the matter. But when we find the introduction of the commandments, as connected with the deliverance from bondage, to be but a form of speech; when we reflect, that the Passover was distinctly instituted to commemorate that event; and when, omitting this form of speech, we see a substantial cause assigned for the reinstitution of the day, and the declared purpose of its re-establishment

to be the same as in the beginning; we may very fairly assert, it was to commemorate, not the deliverance, but the Creation.

In the deliverance out of Egypt the Israelites only were concerned; in the Creation, all mankind. But Mons. Beausobre writes: "Although in Genesis it is said, God *blessed* the seventh day, that is, pronounced happy the Sabbath day, and that he *sanctified* or separated it from other days; nevertheless, there is no commandment about celebrating or keeping it holy." I have already shown, that we are not authorized to argue from the Book of Genesis as to the duties of religion in the period which it comprehends, Moses never having intended to give a history any otherwise complete, than was necessary for the regular introduction of the account of the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai. If the Almighty in the first instance did select or set apart one day out of seven, and design to make that day a happy day, there must have been some farther object in it. Idleness, as Mons. Beausobre says, could not be

pleasing to him; and therefore, though labour was suspended on that day, worship was to be performed. The equivocation about keeping the Sabbath day holy is fully answered by the way in which it was observed by the Jews upon its renewal. When this renewal took place, all the copies of the Bible, one excepted, say: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." So, whatever might have been the case before the departure out of Egypt, yet after this, and before the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai, the Sabbath had been instituted; and how strictly it was to be observed, the falling of the manna plainly decided. Moses, too, upon its renewal says, in allusion to the Creation, that the Sabbath was "hallowed even in the beginning."

The only solid proof, that in the beginning it was not ordered to be kept holy, that is adduced from the sacred pages of the Bible by Mons. Beausobre, is this: "When God sent the Deluge into the world for men's iniquities, among the crimes laid to their charge we do not find they are ac-

cused of breaking the Sabbath, which would nevertheless be a crime committed against the majesty of Heaven." Any refutation of such evidence as this is almost unnecessary. If the iniquity of men were so great as stated, it would be foolish to imagine they observed the Sabbath. It is more likely their crimes consisted partly in the neglect of it, as the righteousness of Noah might in the observance of it in his family. But I would ask this writer, whether, if even any one species of crime had become so violently flagrant and universal, this crime alone, whatever it might be, though not aggravated by the neglect of the Sabbath, which every one will believe it was, were not sufficient for the punishment it brought down; or whether, supposing the Sabbath to have been kept holy by them, however improbable it is, this crime were to go on unchecked or unpunished. Nor is the Sabbath in Genesis spoken of "*by way of anticipation;*" since in Exodus, upon its renewal, reference is made to its having been established at the Creation. In one respect in the be-

ginning it may be said to have been by anticipation; because, in every case, a law must be made, or a positive duty be enjoined, before it can be observed, but it took effect immediately after its institution.

Next, although the Sabbath is frequently called in Scripture a sign, this does not imply a ceremony. The same might be said of the Lord's Day. The observance of this day is the distinguishing sign of a true Christian: but then it is a positive duty, instituted by the immediate successors of our Lord, and, for aught we know, sanctioned by himself before his ascension. Supposing it a sign, as indeed it is, nothing but an instituted rite could serve for this sign; and being instituted in the beginning by God, it became a positive law, enjoining a duty, obligatory upon all who should then embrace the true religion. A natural duty, or a rite dictated by nature, being natural, never could have been peculiar or appropriated; and therefore it was right, that a positive duty should be instituted, after the Fall more

particularly, to keep the true worshippers distinct from the profane and idolaters. The promised seed was to spring from a particular branch of mankind; and therefore it was very important, that this branch should be kept more holy than the rest by some distinct sign, which sign was the continued worshipping of the true God on the seventh day: and, if the whole world around it should renounce Him, yet it was never to do so, and the observance of the Sabbath would have prevented this. The Sabbath was a universal law also in this, and consequently obligatory, that no one could be a disciple of the true God, without observing it; just as a man cannot be a real Christian without baptism and the observance of the LORD'S DAY. Therefore, whether you call the Sabbath day "a privilege peculiar to the Israelites," or "a sign," or "one of God's special mercies," or "the law of the Hebrews," it is of no consequence: this Sabbath, not being an afterthought, as I have said, to turn mankind from idolatry, but a foredesign to prevent their sinking

into it, cannot be said to have been "given to the Jews on account of their transgressions, and for the hardness of their hearts."

The Jewish doctors not allowing the Sabbath to be observed by the proselytes of the gate with the same ceremonies as themselves, because they had not received the token of the covenant, does not convert the duty of keeping this day holy into a ceremony. The rite of circumcision being instituted, these converts ought to have submitted to it; but we may believe, that its devout observance by these proselytes would have been approved by God, notwithstanding their not being regularly initiated into the Jewish church by that ceremony, which on a future day was to be entirely abrogated. Farther, the keeping of the Sabbath being attended with peculiar circumstances does not show, that it was a ceremonial institution for one people only, but, on the contrary, that it was intended as a universal law given from the beginning of the world. Mons. Beausobre says, it appears to have been a ceremony, from "the superstitious exact-

ness" with which it was observed for four-and-twenty hours under pain of death; and that "reason itself will teach us one day is not more holy in the sight of God than another."—See the whole of page 138 (Beaus.).

I know not what he means by superstitious exactness in the observance of the Sabbath by the Hebrews. Surely the manner in which its institution was announced, the ordinance to keep it hallowed, the illustration of the holiness in which it was to be held by the falling of the manna, the punishment awarded to its neglect, the way in which it is always mentioned in Scripture, indicate very forcibly, that the Sabbath did require, *in those days*, a very rigid observance; and, in any case, it was as well for them to err on the right side as the wrong. And when he just afterward speaks of the "criminal impiety of robbing God even of one single moment in the day," either he is trifling with his subject in a mode that destroys all deference to his judgment, or, if he mean what he has written, he cannot with any propriety ridicule the

observance of the Sabbath by " a superstitious exactness." It was this error, which fell to the lot of our Lord to correct, when the proper time for the alteration came.

In the next place it is by no means clear, that reason teaches one day is not more holy in the sight of God than another. If this be the case, why was the seventh day sanctified, upon which nothing did occur, save a total stop in the Creation? If a day have ever been set apart to the worship of God, this day becomes more holy in itself than another. Who will assert, that the day on which our Saviour rose from the grave is not rendered holy by this circumstance, with the marked distinction of it afterward by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles? The commandment says: " Six days shalt thou labour; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt do no manner of work." The simple circumstance of its being the seventh day of the week gives it no peculiar intrinsic worth; but an adventitious value is stamped upon

it by its appropriation. The object being, apparently, that out of every seven days one should be set apart for the worship of the Creator, we are directed in the other six days to labour and to do all that we have to do, that on the seventh our attentions and regards may be turned solely toward God. The institution of the Sabbath was designed for the benefit of man in the worship of his Maker. On this day the true believers were to withdraw themselves from the world, and from their usual employments; and, forming a communion of saints, to hold intercourse with the Deity, in thought, in prayer, in adoration. Hence it follows, there are many considerations, which decide, that a Sabbath day should be a high day; a particularly remarkable day; a day which occurrences have marked with a fixed character, distinguishing it in the annals of the world from every other day whatever; thus giving it a value beyond all other ordinary days. The day selected for the Sabbath therefore should be one, to which something uncommon and of a religious tendency was attached;

and not any day directed by the convenience or caprice of worldly interests. When the first Sabbath was instituted, the day had not been applied to any other purpose; and when it was reinstituted by God's command, it was to be dated from a grand event, as the first Sabbath was, yet coinciding in the original design, to commemorate the Creation, and for the worship of God. To act wickedly on any day is sin: but the neglect of the right appropriation of the Lord's day is of itself a sin distinct from any other, and adds an additional guilt to any wickedness committed on it.

The deduction, finally, is that when the Passover was instituted to commemorate the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, either at that time or at Mount Sinai, the RENEWAL of the institution of the Sabbath took place, for the purpose for which it was established in the beginning, to commemorate the Creation, and to preserve the Israelites and the world at large from exhibiting a universal scene of idolatry.

PART IV.

THIS SABBATH OBSERVED UNTIL THE ASCENSION.

UNTIL the Ascension, the Law and the Prophets, and the predictions of our Lord concerning himself, were not fulfilled; and as the Law, therefore, was not abrogated, so neither was the observance of this Sabbath. And as there were types of the resurrection of our Lord in the Old Testament, and prophecies concerning it, these must have been filled up by the occurrence of this fact, before the abrogation of the Law. After the resurrection had taken place, our Lord said to his disciples, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me."—"And he said unto them, Thus it

is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold! I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, *until ye be endued with power from on high.*" Accordingly, until the day of Pentecost, when they received this power, the apostles were not fully ordained for the work of their ministry; prophecy was not fulfilled; and the Law, not having accomplished its time, remained in force, and consequently the old Sabbath could not be discontinued; which accounts for the conduct of the disciples then regarding it. Some writers have said, that our Lord himself actually abolished the Sabbath on the seventh day; but there is no positive evidence of the fact. One in the sixteenth century * tells us: "About this

* Dr. Taylor.

time, a certain ruler of the synagogue renewed the old question about the observation of the Sabbath, repining at Jesus, that he cured a woman that was crooked, loosing her from her infirmity, with which she had been afflicted eighteen years. But Jesus made the man ashamed by an argument from their own practice, who themselves loose an ass or an ox from the stall, and lead him to water. And by the same arguments he also stopped the mouths of the Scribes and Pharisees, which were open upon him for curing an hydropic person on the Sabbath. For Jesus, that he *might draw off and separate Christianity from the yoke of ceremonies*, and take off the *strict Mosaical rites, chose to do very many of his miracles upon the Sabbath, that he might do the work of abrogation and institution both at once.*"

By another writer it is affirmed, that our Lord in having said, upon *a certain occasion*, " The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath ;" and " The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath ;" had untied " the bands of

Moses:" and Mons. Beausobre observes, "*Were all men, and all nations in the world, bound to observe the Sabbath*, then it would never have been abrogated, and the Christians ought to have observed it throughout all ages, as at first they did out of condescension to the Jews."

It is with diffidence I venture to oppose these studied opinions: but as I conceive, that the conclusions drawn from the facts are erroneous, I shall endeavour to prove this, and show, that the Sabbath was not, and could not be, dispensed with, by Jesus Christ, during his time upon the Earth. Now, the opinions of these writers refer to the period when our Lord was dwelling among mankind, and only beginning the demolition of the Jewish worship, or preparing the world for the foundation of his new religion. They err, therefore, who maintain, that he abolished the seventh-day Sabbath; for it appears he invariably sanctioned its observance, by entering the synagogues on that day, and in them expounding the Scriptures, and "preaching the kingdom of God;"

and at other times he commanded his disciples to observe the customs of the Law. Neither, indeed, could another day for public worship be satisfactorily instituted at that time, since the events we commemorate on the Lord's day had not then happened, and the people were not sufficiently acquainted with the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity; and, in point of fact, the erection of the Christian church was not completed till the day of Pentecost, when the descent of the Holy Ghost occurred. To prove the abrogation of the seventh-day Sabbath, St. Paul's words are adduced: "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days." But, be it observed, these were written AFTER our Lord *had fulfilled* the law in his death, resurrection, and ascension: and truly then it was to be abrogated; and another *peculiar* and *appropriate* day for public worship was instituted in its stead for Christians to observe, and this, we have good reasons to believe, by our

Lord's previous sanction. Yet so long as our Lord continued with mankind, he kept holy the Sabbath day, by attending the holy convocations therein, abstaining from all trifling occupations, and ceasing from labour. Jesus never, in the slightest hint, chid the Pharisees for observing it: they were rebuked for not heeding in what the true spirit of religion consisted, and for the traditions with which they had encumbered the law. The disciples did the same; though it cannot be supposed that they would have *regarded* the Sabbath, *in any manner*, up to the day of Christ's death, and, indeed, AFTER IT, if Jesus himself had abrogated it. This last fact of itself would refute all ideas of any abrogation of the Sabbath at that time. When Jesus Christ came into the world to fulfil the law, it was not in one point alone; and therefore not only did he receive *baptism* and *circumcision*, but also, in keeping the Sabbath day holy, did he "fulfil all righteousness;" while the institution of the new Sabbath,

the new church, and the new worship, was left entirely to the apostles to establish; which, accordingly, they did.

As to the Sabbath day being abrogated by our Lord's declaring the Sabbath to have been made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, this has been noticed in part before; and as to the question whether the Christians ought to have observed the Sabbath throughout all ages as at first they did, I shall resume by and by. On the assertion, that the Christians observed it out of mere condescension to the Jews, a few observations are previously necessary, because it is unfounded and illiberal; and notwithstanding Saint Paul thought it prudent to become "all things to all men," he did so with the utmost circumspection. The Christians, in regarding the Sabbath, followed the example of their divine Master; evincing to the unconverted Jews, that they reverenced as highly as themselves the same God, whom they (the Jews) worshipped upon that day. It never

has been contended by any writer since our Lord's time, that all nations in the world were bound to observe the Sabbath from the time of Moses; since the fact is indisputable, that it was a sign for the JEWS alone and their *proselytes*. But as it was not obligatory on all nations, the Sabbath might be done away with; and consequently, though the Christians did a while observe it, there was no obligation upon them "to have kept it throughout all ages, as at first they did;" more especially when they had such a sanction as that of the apostles for observing another day, by them instituted in its stead. That in the beginning all nations under Heaven were obligated to the observance of the Sabbath, I believe; but it does not follow, that, because it was instituted by the Almighty, it should never be abolished by him.

Monsieur Beausobre, however, is a French writer; and for the sake of the character of his own country, in which the pollution of the Christian Sabbath is disgraceful, probably felt it his in-

terest to underrate the original Sabbath day, that the frivolity and giddiness of his countrymen upon THE LORD'S DAY might be extenuated.

The apostle, when he wrote to the Colossians, in the words quoted above, betrays at once his situation; and that he, like the Protestant Reformed church in later times, had to steer between *two extremes*, between the Judaizing teachers and the opinions of heathens. To say, that Christ's coming was immediately to abrogate a set day for the purpose of public worship, by destroying every institution of the nature of the Sabbath, would be to assert, that his coming had consummated the intent, design, or purpose of all religion, and that there was no need for its *maintenance* any farther. Neither is it true, that our Saviour said he was at liberty "to observe the Sabbath or not:" and as this idea is drawn from one of his public discourses on a particular occasion, let us examine the two accounts of the matter in St. Matthew and St. Luke, omitting St. Mark for the present, as Mons. Beausobre has omitted a reference to St.

Luke, whose account, which follows, is very material. "And it came to pass, on the second Sabbath after the first, that Jesus went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath days? And Jesus, answering them, said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, *when he was an hungered*, and they which were with him: how he went into the house of God, and did eat the show bread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone? And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." The words of St. Matthew are: "At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day. But Jesus

said unto them, Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the show bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the Law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless? But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple. *But if ye had known what this meaneth*, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless; for the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day."

Upon the relation of this circumstance by the evangelists, Mons. Beausobre grounds his assertion: but unless the language be strained to such an extreme, as to pervert its obvious sense, it cannot be interpreted as if our Lord intended to say "He was then at liberty to observe the Sabbath or not;" though certainly he might have done so in *direct* terms, if He pleased. The whole tenour

of His conversation, and the undeviating course of His ministry, instead of sanctioning such an interpretation, disprove it in many instances. When the disciples plucked the ears of corn, if they did transgress the law, it was as much an act of accidental necessity in their case, for "they were an hungered," as in that of David; and before David and his company obtained the showbread from the priest, the priest required them to be purified under the customs of the Law, which they certified they had been. Hunger in both cases was the act of need which occasioned each occurrence. So that Jesus did not mean us to infer, that David acted rightly, except so far as the urgency of the situation extenuated and remitted the obligation laid by the law of God upon him. When this allusion to the showbread was made by Jesus, there was no intention in the comparison He drew, to place the institution of the Sabbath, a positive duty, upon the same footing with that which was *no otherwise than a ceremony*. But the implication is, that, as David was justified in acting as

he did, by the extremity to which he was reduced, so were the disciples. St. Mark, in his narration of this affair, adds, that our Lord said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

When Jesus spoke of the priests profaning the Sabbath in the temple, and remaining blameless, we must recollect, that he was illustrating the absurdity of the doctrine of the Pharisees concerning the rigid observance of this day. It is not written in the Law, that the priests did *profane* it: but the Law having appointed additional ceremonies on this day, rendered certain of the priests liable to do servile work, such as *lighting fires* for the sacrifices, &c. This, according to the strict letter of the Law, was a profanation of the Sabbath: yet they were blameless, since without this the sacrifices, which were enjoined by the Law, must have been neglected. The purport of our Lord's words is this: "If I, who am greater than your temple, and should be reverenced as much as you respect that; and if I,

for whose worship, in remembrance of the Creation, the Sabbath was established, show you, by my allusions, and by the example of my disciples, that, contrary to your construction of the Law, you may do that which is actually necessary on the Sabbath day; why do ye censure these individuals, when, in the spirit of the Law, they are blameless?"

The conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees on this occasion made a deep impression on the mind of Jesus, and he afterwards reverted to it. Perceiving, that very incorrect sentiments as to the institution of the Sabbath were prevalent among the people, owing to Jewish traditions, on the very next Sabbath He went into a synagogue, apparently with the latent but fixed determination, to excite the question about its observance, and have a fair opportunity of instructing the people more fully upon it. As Jesus entered the synagogue He observed a man with a withered hand, and He healed him. When the Pharisees saw this, that they might accuse Him of violating the sanctity of

the Sabbath day, they asked Him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days?" Jesus gave them an answer by other interrogatories, inquiring, "Is it lawful to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? Or what man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold of it, and lift it out? How much, then, is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful *to do well* on the Sabbath days." It was on a similar occasion, that our Lord rebuked a ruler in the synagogue, in the following manner: "Thou hypocrite! doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox, or his ass, from the stall, and lead him away to watering?" These instances develop accurately the intention of the saying of Jesus, That he was Lord of the Sabbath, and that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. The proneness of mankind to evil after the Fall made it more especially an imperative policy, that a Sabbath should be established as a beacon, to keep the mind of man in the true

worship of God, and to recall his attention every seventh day from worldly affairs to the end for which he lives. If, therefore, men were inclined to fall into sin, even when the immediate visible providence of the Lord continually hovered over them, and the Sabbath were intended to prevent this; it is evident enough, that man's disposition was not adapted to the Sabbath, but the Sabbath made for man, and for man to observe with holiness. When the Sabbath was instituted, the injunction as to its observance implied no exactness of the kind the Jews thought fit to lie under. It was ordained only, as we find in Exodus, "that no manner of work should be done in it, save that every man must eat." The reader, perhaps, will be apt to contrast the interruption of the falling of the manna, and the gathering the ears of corn; but he will recollect, that the gathering of the manna was a set work, whereas the plucking the ears of corn took place accidentally, in simply passing through a corn-field, into which the disciples had not gone with the predetermined inten-

tion of so doing: besides, manna sufficient for two days was sent down on the eve of the Sabbath, with an express injunction, that none should go out to gather it on the seventh day. When, therefore, it is said, it is lawful to do what is imperiously necessary on a Sabbath, it is restricted to doing well; not wasting the time in amusements and pleasure, but in being charitably serviceable to our neighbours, if need require, and dutiful toward God.

In the great commission, which the apostles received from our Lord, we do not positively learn, amid all the powers with which they were intrusted, that they were instructed to abrogate the Sabbath. They had power given them against all unclean spirits, to cast them out, and heal all manner of sickness and of disease; and they were to go and baptize all nations, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, preaching the doctrines of repentance, and the atonement of Christ for the remission of sins. Yet, as it has been said, that JESUS "did the work of abroga-

tion," it is requisite to trace his footsteps in those several places, where we shall find Him holding conversations very applicable to this subject. In one spot we hear Him saying, "The Law and the Prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." The Law, in this passage, is spoken of as being dead: but the words have not this meaning entirely; or, if they have, the Law and the Commandments are not one and the same; for the Commandments were given at first separately, and independently of the Law, the Law being subsequently "ADDED because of transgressions" of the Decalogue. Suppose the Law, at the time on which I am writing, to have been abrogated; yet, notwithstanding the Commandments had, of course, become incorporated into the Law, still the abrogation of the Law did not involve that of the Commandments, as is plainly expressed in the general preachings of Jesus Christ. Besides, the institution of the Sabbath, as well as the Promises, preceded the Law, the

Covenant being made before the Law; so that, when the Law was annulled or fulfilled, yet the Promises were not cancelled; for they are not altogether completed yet; and therefore, if that covenant were not, neither was the institution of the Sabbath, which was prior to the Law, and independent of it. If it be otherwise, how is the former passage from the New Testament to be reconciled with the following? "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least *commandments*, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever shall do, and teach men the same, he shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven." Hence, if our Lord came not to destroy the Law, when "the kingdom of God was preached," after John's time; and the moral precepts in the Sermon from the Mount,

whence the words above quoted are taken, were the least commandments, and these were strictly to be observed; it follows, that there were some *greater*, by which mankind were bound. If we listen still more attentively to the preachings of Jesus, instead of now loosening "the bands of Moses," we shall hear our Saviour binding them tighter in some respects. Continuing his discourse, and alluding to the greater commandments, Jesus turned to the Scribes, and said to them, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Moreover, on a variety of occasions, as it suited Him, Jesus appealed to one or other of these great commandments with a conspicuous reverence, as being positive duties. When Jesus cured a man of the leprosy, He even desired him to go and "show himself to the priest," and "there offer for his cleansing, according as Moses had commanded, for a testimony unto them."

These are not symptoms of the Law being yet abrogated, much less the Commandments. It was apparently the centurion's loving his nation, and having built them a synagogue, that induced Jesus to visit and heal his servant. The mention of the word synagogue brings to my recollection a circumstance, which proves, that Jesus was far from annulling the Sabbath. We are told that, "as his custom," or regular practice, "was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read;" it being customary in that place to offer the Bible to any person of reputed wisdom, that he might expound a chapter from it. We are also informed, that, in the synagogues, Jesus was permitted "to preach the Gospel of the kingdom;" but that, during the time He was not performing this service for his Father, He was "healing all manner of diseases among the people;" and all these facts are expressly mentioned several times by the Evangelists. In these writings, our Saviour is to be found on a Sabbath day *invariably in the synagogue*, for "on Sabbath

days he taught them in the temple," but very seldom on other days; that is, the Gospel does not record the instances, though the synagogues were open two other days during the week. In the many conversations of Jesus with the Scribes and Pharisees, there is a constant tone of rebuke; not for keeping the Sabbath day holy, but for hypocrisy, ostentation, and pride. Our Lord said to them, that they omitted "the weightier matters of the Law;" that they paid their tithes of mint, and rue, and all manner of herbs, but passed over judgment and the love of God: these, said Jesus, "ought ye to have done, and *not to leave the other undone.*" When one of these Pharisees came to our Lord, and asked him, "Good master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "If thou wilt enter into eternal life, *keep the commandments.*" Here the Commandments are taken out, and distinguished from the Law. Uopn being asked which commandment, Jesus is related, in this place, to have mentioned six only; but, it is conjectured, He selected those

which the individual had neglected, more particularly than the others, which he might have observed, to show, that they all of them were in force. The one repeated last was that of our duty towards our neighbour. However, at another opportunity, upon being asked which was the GREAT COMMANDMENT, Jesus replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the *second* is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS HANG ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS." If, from the record of these commandments, Jesus selected and briefly stated two, it does not lessen the authority of the others, and the other parts of them; and as, in referring to the first commandment, the worship of God is implied, so is the day originally set apart for this purpose to be kept holy and observed, according to the same ordinance by which both were instituted.

There is evidently one straight line, which should be kept in interpreting the Sacred Writings; but few, if any, can pursue it without sometimes swerving. While all, however, are more or less liable to deviate from it, some will be right in certain parts, some in others. We ought, therefore, mutually to respect each other's opinions. So thought Dr. Butler, who said, it was only by different men pursuing different lights, which appeared to shine before them in the Scriptures, that truth and correctness are to be obtained. To me the substance of the evangelical writing appears directed against the insincerity of certain Jews, rather than to dissolve the Commandments. "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites," said Jesus, "as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, *teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*. For, LAYING ASIDE THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD, *ye hold the traditions of men*, as the washing of pots and cups; and *many*

other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or mother; making the WORD of none effect, through your tradition which ye have delivered. And many such like things do ye." Corban signified a gift that had been vowed to the temple; and, if any had vowed their earnings to the temple, they were freed by these traditions from supporting their parents, or relatives, or poor neighbours. So, if enough were given to the temple, they might squander or do what they liked with the rest without fear of punishment. Calmet supports this interpretation. In these passages the utmost deference is paid to the Commandments; and how much is the sanctity

and obligation of them increased, when the Son of God calls them THE WORD!

St. John, too, instructs us, that the Law was only in progress toward its fulfilment during Jesus Christ's earthly career: for, when the feast of tabernacles was nigh, Jesus said unto his disciples, "Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come." But after "his brethren were gone up, then went He up also, not openly, but as it were in secret." About the midst of the feast, however, Jesus went and taught publicly in the temple. Here the dispute about the Sabbath was again raised. Jesus said to them, "I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses, therefore, gave unto you circumcision (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers), and ye, on the Sabbath day, circumcise a man. If a man, on the Sabbath day, receive circumcision, that the Law of Moses [as ye think it is] should not be broken, are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day? *Judge not according to the*

appearance, but judge righteous judgment:" that is, exercise some discernment, and observe wherein the spirit of the commandments and true religion consist. The performance of this rite of circumcision is classed with the servile work of the temple, one being considered as necessary as the other at that time.

Lastly, if example be the source of custom, and custom be to sanction observances, we need no other comment upon the life of Jesus Christ, to show whether He had abrogated the Sabbath, than the circumstance, that the pious Maries, rather than buy spices on the evening of the Sabbath, even to embalm the body of our Lord, went and fulfilled their intentions the day or morning before. But it is very unlikely that the Maries would have held the Sabbath so sacred after Christ's death as they did, if their Lord and Master had previously annulled it.

We have now seen, that whenever Jesus had occasion to speak of the Sabbath, He never did more than intimate the abrogation of it; but en-

deavoured to teach his auditors the intent and use of it, and that they were no longer bound by the tradition of the Jews in their manner of observing it. The Sabbath was respected by Jesus, as were the Commandments; and when the Law, which had served for the shadow of things to come, was done away, the Commandments, on which it hung, and to which it was added (for the Law was added on account of transgressions), being positive duties, and not ceremonies, remained in full force.

Having come to that period in the sacred history, where we hear of the death of our Redeemer, what *private* instructions He gave the apostles before his ascension we cannot pronounce, though there may be ground for certain inferences. This, indeed, is clear, that, although we have the chief events in his life recorded by the Evangelists, yet much is omitted; and, as St. John writes, "There are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." But as Jesus came to

fulfil all righteousness in one instance, so also in others, submitting to the rite of circumcision, and to baptism; and, walking blameless in the commandments of God, Jesus kept holy the Sabbath day.

PART V.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLES FOR CHANGING THE SABBATH FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK; OR, MORE PROPERLY, THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK THE ORIGINAL SABBATH IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

BEFORE I enter on the discussion of the institution of the Christian Sabbath, it will harmonize the subject, and lead the reader more clearly to the point, if we consider the abrogation of the Law, of which Dr. Warburton gives the following account.

"Whenever it was abrogated, it must needs be done in the same solemn manner in which it was established; so that the one might be as well known as the other: because it was of the highest importance to a people, so strictly bound to obedience, not to be mistaken concerning the

power under which they lived. Natural equity requires it, as a necessary condition in the imposing and abrogating of all civil laws and institutions whatsoever. Now, the Theocracy having never been thus abolished until the coming of Christ, we conclude, that it continued to subsist until that time.

"Nor, indeed, could it have been abolished without dissolving the whole frame of the republic; since all the laws of it, whether as to their equity, force, or fitness, as well as the whole ritual of worship, respected and referred to God as civil governor. But neither by the declaration of any prophet, nor by the act of any good king, did the institution suffer the least change in any of its parts, from the time of its establishment by Moses to its dissolution by Jesus Christ, either by addition, correction, or abrogation. Consequently, the Theocracy was existing throughout that whole period. Nothing being more absurd than to suppose, that national laws, all made in reference to the form of government, should remain invariable,

while the government itself was changed. For what the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says of the PRIEST (in a constitution where the two societies were incorporated) must be equally true of the KING. 'THE PRIESTHOOD BEING CHANGED, THERE IS MADE, OF NECESSITY, A CHANGE ALSO OF THE LAW:' and now it was, that Jesus, the MESSIAH, who is here spoken of as making this change in quality of PRIEST, made it likewise in quality of KING. For, as we learn from the history of His ministry, he came as heir of God, to succeed immediately, without any interregnum in his Father's kingdom: GOD, having DELIVERED UP to him the kingdom, of which he was then in possession. And this change in the government, from the *temporal Theocracy* of God the Father to the *spiritual Theocracy of God the Son*, was made in the same solemn and authentic manner, in which that Theocracy was introduced. God raised up, from amongst his chosen people, a Prophet like unto Moses, who exercised the *legislative* power like Moses, and assumed the

regal power like God. He gave a NEW LAW to be administered in a NEW KINGDOM, and confirmed the divinity of the dispensation by the most stupendous miracles. Thus the *Theocracy* continued till the coming of Christ.

" This abolition of it by the Son of God I take to be the true completion of that famous *prophecy* of Jacob, of which so much hath been written and disputed: THE SCEPTRE SHALL NOT DEPART FROM JUDAH, NOR A LAWGIVER FROM BETWEEN HIS FEET, UNTIL SHILOH COME; i. e. the Theocracy shall continue over the Jews, until Christ comes to take possession of his Father's kingdom: for there was never LAWGIVER in JUDAH but God, by the ministry of MOSES, until the coming of his SON.

" JESUS, the MESSIAH, the best interpreter of the oracles of God, of which He himself is the capital subject, and for whose sake the *chain of prophecies* was so early drawn out, and extended to such a length, seems to have paraphrased and explained the words of Jacob concerning *the de-*

parture of the sceptre from Judah, by his declaration recorded in St. Matthew, 'THE PROPHETS AND THE LAW PROPHESIED TILL JOHN;' i. e. the Mosaic Law, and the theocratic government by which it was dispensed, continued in being till the approach of this harbinger of Christ, John the Baptist; but was then superseded by the promulgation of a *new Law*, and the establishment of a *new kingdom*."—

"We have shown, from various considerations of weight, that this THEOCRACY, which was instituted by the ministry of Moses, continued over that people till the coming of Shiloh, or Christ; that *prophet like unto Moses*, whom God had promised to *raise up*. And to support what hath been urged from reason to illustrate this important truth, we have here a prophetic declaration, enouncing the same thing—the *sceptre shall not depart from Judah, until Shiloh come:* Shiloh is Christ. Now Christ is not the successor of those *vicegerents* of the Jewish state, but of God himself, THE KING OF THE JEWS. The sceptre, therefore, which

descends to him through the hands of those vicegerents, is not merely a civil but a THEOCRATIC SCEPTRE. This, at the same time, explains the evangelic doctrine of CHRIST'S KINGDOM, arising out of the Theocracy, or kingdom of God. Hence the distinction of Christ's kingdom not being of this world. The Theocracy, which was administered over the Jews only, and in a carnal manner, was a *kingdom of this world:* but when transferred to Shiloh, and extended over all mankind, and administered in a spiritual manner, it became a *kingdom not of this world.* And the making the *sceptre of Judah* neither *tribal* nor MERELY civil, but properly *theocratic*, clears the prophecy from those insuperable difficulties, which render all the other interpretations hurtful or dishonourable to the prophetic system in general.

"These are the superior advantages of the sense I have here endeavoured to establish. Nor are these all. The prophecy is seen to embrace a much nobler object than was imagined. It was supposed to relate only to the fortunes of the *Jewish eco-*

nomy, and we find it extends itself to the *whole dispensation of grace*. It was considered but as a simple PROPHECY, while it had the dignity of a REVELATION. Thus we see this noble prophecy, concerning the transfer of the kingdom of God to Christ, contains a matter of much greater dignity in itself, and of much greater moment for the support of CHRISTIANITY, than could arise from any perplexed question about the reign of the Asmonean princes, or the continuance of the power of life and death amongst a tributary people. For, in predicting the *abolition of the Law*, it supplies us with a new and excellent argument for the conversion of the Jewish people, fatally persuaded of its eternal obligation."

This is the account of the abolition of the Law given by Dr. Warburton: and although St. Matthew relates, that Jesus Christ said He was "not come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets," yet we know he added, to exemplify his meaning, "but to fulfil;" and on another occasion He said, "The Law and the Prophets were until John; since that

time the kingdom of God is preached:" plainly intending that, after His ascension, when the Law and the Prophets would be fulfilled in Him, they were to cease. This abolition of the Law, as mentioned by God in a revelation to mankind, wherein he declares of Christ, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him;" and, "Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me: *him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.*" And by the abolition of the Law it was, that a better hope became clearly revealed to mankind, in bringing life and immortality to LIGHT by Jesus Christ, whose word hath the promise not only of the life which now is, but of that which is to come.

We may thus be satisfied as to the abolition of the Law, and the plenary authority of our Divine Master. We shall next consider how it came to pass, that the Sabbath was changed to the first day of the week, called by Christians the Lord's Day. In our investigation of the Sacred Writings, com-

mon justice requires us, to recollect the state of the world when they were composed, and the persons by whom they were written; and to make the fair and requisite allowances, to which they are thereby entitled. If we do this, the Gospel will not appear such an imperfect work as it otherwise would; and, far from being surprised, that it does not contain a digested history of the Christian church, we shall be fully satisfied with that circumstantial evidence, which it affords, of its regular establishment.

On the following words of St. John, "And many other signs truly did Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name:" Dr. Sherlock observes: "These words stand towards the close of St. *John*'s Gospel, and are by some thought to be the last of his own writing. They give us an account of the nature of his Gospel, and of his end and design in publishing it to

the world."—" You have also the reason assigned which moved St. John to publish his Gospel, WHICH EXTENDS LIKEWISE TO ALL THE OTHER WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. 'But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name.' The Gospels, then, were published, that they might be a standing evidence to all ages of God's purpose to redeem the world by sending his Son to take our nature on him, that he might 'die for our sins,' and 'rise again for our justification.' "

As a preliminary observation, and a very just one, it is to be borne in mind, that the church being instituted by our Lord himself, there can exist no doubt of his having appointed over it in the beginning those who, He KNEW, would NEVER promote or suffer an innovation or a change in it, however harmless in its nature it might be, unless it were beneficial, and one He would not disapprove. If, therefore, we find, from sufficient evidence, that not merely NO ALTERATION was made

in that Church, or indeed, from the nature of their office, could be *introduced by the Apostles;* but that the day devoted to the public worship of God, the Almighty Father, in their church, from its first institution, was the first day of the week, any scruples about the matter become fastidious, and unworthy a follower of Christ, when they induce people not to regard the Lord's Day equally holy as the Jews did their Sabbath.

With regard to their authority in erecting the Christian Church, but few particulars need be given. We are told by St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, that he was an eye-witness of every thing he related. He must therefore have *heard* the directions of our Lord just before the Ascension. The Ascension, he writes, occurred "after that He [Jesus] through the Holy Ghost, *had given commandments unto the Apostles whom he had chosen.* To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many *infallible proofs;* being seen of them forty days, and *speaking of* THE THINGS PERTAINING TO THE KINGDOM OF

GOD." And in his Gospel, St. Luke adds, "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Now, it was not long after the day of Pentecost, when they had received power, that we hear the Christian converts represented as a CHURCH, as they had once before been. "And great fear came upon all the CHURCH, and upon as many as heard these things." And when St. Paul, after his conversion to Christianity, or rather his divine call to the Christian ministry, was passing through the cities of Derbe and Lystra, with other disciples, "THEY DELIVERED THEM [the brethren] THE DECREES FOR TO KEEP, THAT WERE ORDAINED OF THE APOSTLES AND ELDERS, WHICH WERE AT JERUSALEM [after the descent of the Holy Ghost]. *And so were the churches established in the faith*, and increased in number daily." St. Matthew also says: "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in

the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU." Thus it is evident, that some laws to govern the Christian church were very early made; and that our Lord personally sanctioned some of them; and, from the apostles using the seventh day Sabbath only for the purpose of reasoning with the Jews, as will presently appear, while they held their peculiar assemblies in prayer on the first day of the week, that they disregarded the seventh day Sabbath, and desired to put an end to it, as the first, or Lord's Day, would answer the purpose of the seventh day Sabbath.

But we find something more than probability, that our Lord did himself found the form and government of his own church. In chapter xviii. verse 17, of St. Matthew's Gospel, after Jesus had been giving instructions concerning the treatment of an unruly brother, he said: Ἐὰν δὲ παρακούσῃ αὐτῶν, εἰπὲ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. All the commentators on this passage I have met with interpret it as

referring to a constituted society of Christians; who must have had station, and influence, or power, to correct the offending brother, or the communication of his trespass to them would have been useless. One editor says, in a note, " Ecclesiæ, i. e. præsidentibus et gubernatoribus ecclesiæ, qui totius ecclesiæ nomine singulorum habeat curam." It matters not, that this custom was in use among the Jews: but this it shows, that our Lord did give some explicit instructions to the apostles, as to the government of the church, all of which the evangelist had not *occasion* to put in writing; and that a supreme authority in ecclesiastical matters was vested in them.

Under the sanction belonging to this authority in the apostles, derived from Him who was both Lord and Christ, we read, that the Christian converts did, according to their DECREES, assemble upon the first day of the week for public worship. By some writers *, and Mons. Beausobre follows

* Morer's Dialogues.

them, it has been asserted, that, in the first days of the Christian church, both the Sabbath day and the Lord's day also were observed. Of this we have no example in the sacred writings; and if such were the case, it is no argument against the observance of the Lord's day, the first day of the week, instead of Saturday, the seventh, as the Sabbath day. For instance, it might in those times fare with the Christians as now with the Jews; and they be OBLIGED to observe the Sabbath by cessation from their weekly employments, which, in fact, was at first the case; and many of them, being converted Jews, and still impressed with the awful command to keep that day holy, would cheerfully submit to this edict, instead of devoting the day to some unworthy pursuit. That the apostles themselves did certainly attend the synagogues upon the Sabbath day, the sacred writings inform us: and it is very probable their presence in such places would attract the Christian converts, debarred too from their secular avocations, to such places, while their own were closed. But

WHY do we see the apostles in the midst of the synagogues upon Sabbath after Sabbath? "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonica, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days *reasoned* with them out of the Scriptures." In these words St. Luke discloses the motive of the apostles for keeping the Sabbath on the seventh day, as well as observing the Lord's day. When St. Paul had quitted Athens, and had come to Corinth, "he *reasoned* in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and Greeks." Acts, xviii. "And he [St. Paul] came to Ephesus, and left them [his companions] there: *but he himself* entered into the synagogue, and *reasoned* with the Jews." The object therefore of the apostles, in observing the seventh day as the Sabbath, was to avail themselves of the best opportunity they had of discoursing with the Jews, in order to their conversion to Christianity, which the nature of the synagogues well afforded them;

and the Christian disciples, some being converted Jews, some Gentile converts, flocked thither likewise for their own edification. As then we have learned that the apostles had sufficient authority for the establishment of the Christian church; that they made decrees for the regulation of it, which are not named, *though* as to the day for the public worship of God IN IT they made no alteration; and that their observance of the Jewish Sabbath was for a specific purpose in regard to Christianity; it now only remains to show, that the first day of the week was *ordained* by the Apostles for public worship, and that it has claims enough for so great a distinction, which can attach to no other.

That the first day of the week was ordained by the apostles for the public worship of Almighty God in the Christian church, is acknowledged by most writers upon the scriptures, as well as by the concurrent testimony of those who lived close in succession after the apostles: their opinion is not only founded upon reasonable inferences, but upon

positive fact. The inferences of some of them are these: In St. John's Gospel, and in the Acts of the Apostles, we are informed, the Christians assembled on this day for some purpose or other; and the probability is, that it was for public worship: and if they did so, it must have been by direction of those, who instituted the Church we have already spoken of, and to which they belonged. And as by a Church we understand an assembly or congregation of people of one faith, so we also believe them usually to perform, at stated times, the worship of their God in a public manner. Indeed in the beginning this assemblage is necessary to constitute a Church; and so is its continuance, although it may not include all its members at the time of prayer.

As to the fact, St. Luke says, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples were gathered together to break bread."—And St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, i, xvi. 1, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do

ye. Upon the first day of the week [the day of your Christian assemblies, according to Dr. Whitby's paraphrase] let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no [farther need of] gathering when I come."

"These words," says Dr. Whitby, "seem fairly to evince, that it was the custom of the first Christians, and of the apostles, to keep holy the Lord's Day, as a day appointed for religious worship: for First, that μια τῶν σαββάτων, the first day of the week, was the Lord's Day, is fully proved from hence—St. Matthew says, that our Lord rose from the dead, τῇ μια τῶν σαββάτων, upon the first day of the week, St. Mark, c. xxviii, that the Sabbath being over, Mary Magdalen and others came early τῆς μιᾶς τῶν σαββάτων, the first day of the week, c. xvi, and found Christ risen from the dead; and in St. Luke, that they rested on the Sabbath day, according to the commandment; and that they came to the sepulchre, τῇ μια τῶν σαββάτων, on the first day of the week: and so accordingly says St. John, c. xx., so that this phrase

doth certainly import the first day of the week, the day of our Lord's resurrection from the dead; and this the word μια usually signifies in the Septuagint, when it is joined with weeks, days, and months; as the evening and the morning were ἡμερα μία, the first day; so ἡμερα μία τοῦ μηνὸς is the first day of the month, Exodus; and μια τε μηνος is the first day of the month, Leviticus. Moreover κατὰ μίαν may be rendered every first day, as κατα πόλιν in every city, κατ' οἰκου in every family, καταμιαν *sigillatim*.

"Secondly, Observe, that the Jews, in every city where they dwelt, had their collectors of alms; who, in week days, went about the city collecting alms according to the quality and wealth of every Jew; and in the evening of the Sabbath distributed to the poor among the Jews as much as was needful for the following week: and after this example the apostle seems to have ordained, that the Christians should lay up for the poor, or make provision for them on the Lord's Day.

"Thirdly, Observe, that from the beginning the

Christians did assemble on the first day of the week, called by them the Lord's Day, to perform their religious worship, to read the Scriptures, to preach *, and celebrate the Lord's Supper, (Euseb. Eccles. Hist.). 'This day being the Lord's Day we keep it holy,' saith Dionysius, bishop of Corinth.

"Fourthly, Observe, that the apostle gave order, that here, and in the churches of Galatia, collections should be made for the poor on that day; and that all Christians in compliance with that precept still offered their alms upon that day. So Justin Martyr: 'Then they that are able and willing give what they think fit; and what is thus collected is laid up in the hands of the president, who distributes it to orphans, and widows, and other Christians, as their wants require.'

"Fifthly, Observe, that no good reason can be

* It was on an occasion of this kind, when the disciples were assembled together on the first day to break bread, that St. Paul *preached to them*, and continued his speech until midnight. See Acts, xx. 7.—EDIT.

given, why the apostle should limit the collections of the churches of Corinth and Galatia to the first day of the week, but this, that this day was appointed for the worship of our Lord *, and so more fit for the performance of those duties, which concerned his distressed members in those times: for as the works of charity and mercy are proper duties of this day, so doth *the day contain a special motive in it to enlarge their* charity, as being the day in which they were begotten to a lively hope, through the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, 1 Peter, iv. 3; and in which they constantly participated of his precious body and blood, and therefore, having received spiritual things so plentifully from Christ, must be more ready to impart somewhat of their temporals to his needy servants.

"Sixthly, Observe, that on this day (Acts, xx.

* And likewise, that the treasury, or poor's box, being at the place appointed for public worship, this gave an opportunity for the brethren to *bestow*, without giving the trouble of *gathering* when the apostle came.—EDIT.

v. 7) the disciples were not summoned extraordinarily to come together: that St. Paul did not (μεταπαλεῖν) call them together, as he did the assembly of the elders of the church; but the disciples were themselves συνηγμενοι, met in their synaxis, or assembly. The text informs us, that St. Paul tarried with them seven days, and in none of them have we any mention of an assembly to this purpose, but only on the first day of the week.

"Lastly, Observe, that they then met together to break bread; which phrase doth signify the sacred action performed in celebration of the Holy Sacrament, which it was the custom of the primitive Christians to receive in all their churches upon the Lord's Day. This the apostle intimates, when he complains of the Corinthians, 1 Cor. xi, 'That they came together for the worse, because, when they came together in the Church, there were divers divisions among them,' so that they did not eat together at the table of the Lord. Now, thus, 'to come together into one place,' saith he, 'is not to

eat the Lord's Supper,' i. e. it is not so to do it, as that sacred action ought to be performed. This, therefore, when they came together in the church, they did; and therefore what is 'coming together,' v. 17, 'coming to the church,' v. 18, 'coming to one place,' v. 19, is 'coming together to eat,' v. 33. Accordingly, it was the custom of the church, from the apostles' times, thus to communicate upon the Lord's Day: for Pliny, in his letter to the emperor Trajan, tells him, that he 'found nothing to allege against the Christians, but their obstinacy in their superstition; and that it was their custom to meet together on a set day, before it was light, and to bind themselves by the sacrament to do no evil.' This epistle was written only six years after the death of the Evangelist St. John. And Justin Martyr, who wrote but forty years after his death, thus speaks: 'On Sunday all the Christians in the city or country meet together, because that is the day of our Lord's resurrection, and then we have read unto us the writings of the prophets and apostles; this done, the president makes an ora-

tion to the assembly, to exhort them to imitate and do the things they have heard; then we all join in prayer, and after this we celebrate the Sacrament, and they that are willing and able give alms.'"

We find in the gospel of John, xx. 19, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors where shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, 'Peace be unto you.'"

V. 26. "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace be unto you.'"

And in Acts, xx. 7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight."

These are three of the most distinguished passages, which are adduced in support of the observance of the Lord's Day; and are evidence of

the institution of the first day of the week for public worship among Christians: the unconverted JEWS still retaining their Sabbath, as they will perhaps for ever; the CHRISTIANS their Lord's Day. But when the Jews became Christians, they were bound to give up the Sabbath on the seventh day, and conform to the decrees and ordinances made by the apostles for the observance of the Christians. One writer, in opposing the institution of the Lord's Day, attaches no importance to these passages, except that concerning the meeting at Troas. But, it is to be particularly remarked, that in the 20th c. of St. John, v. 19, the expression "being the first day of the week," appears intended to denote this as the occasion of their being met together in prayer, beyond merely expecting the resurrection of Jesus; for in the beginning of the chapter we were told it was the first day; and therefore, to add after, "then the *same day at evening*," the words "BEING THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK," was otherwise superfluous, it being the *third day* in regard to the resurrection.

Hence arises the only remaining question of any importance, how came the apostles, in their worship of the Creator, not to abide by the commandments, which are still retained *in our ritual?* To this I am desirous of drawing the reader's attention, especially if he be one of those, who, with a commendable zeal for a strict adherence to the intention of the Decalogue, "feel it is a sad affair, that the seventh day for public worship should ever have been changed to the first day of the week;" deeming their sincerity impugned, when they repeat the responses concerning the Sabbath, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law."

I answer, first, that the authority with which the apostles were invested, and under which they acted, is a sufficient reason for it, without assigning any other. Secondly, I say, that the commandment to worship the Almighty on the seventh day was given in the beginning, to commemorate the creation, and renewed as a sign to distinguish a particular people; that it was but the

shadow of that which was to come, of which the day of offering Isaac and of Jonah's deliverance were a type; and that it, like the rite of circumcision, was designed at its reinstitution for the Israelites and Jews only; but the first day of the week, THE LORD'S DAY, was for all, for the Gentile and the Jew alike, in that universal Church, wherein neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails any thing, wherein there is no respect of persons, and in which, "He that feareth God, in every nation, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him;" and Christians, in making the response they do, mentally apply their prayer with respect to their Sabbath, as a seventh day being one out of seven.

It may next be inquired, are then the other commandments unlike that one, to observe the *seventh* day? Yes, certainly they are, as they embrace *all times*, persons, and places: but the *Sabbath of the Mosaical law*, St. Paul tells us, was to be done away with. When addressing the Galatians, he says to them: "But now, after that

ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." And in his epistle to the Colossians, he makes the same complaint in other words: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come." When a scribe came to Jesus, and asked him, "Which is the first commandment of all? and Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." I own it would not be an unjust deduction from these words, which imply the worship of God, to infer, that they relate

also to the observance of the Sabbath on the seventh day; but from our Lord having omitted any mention of the Sabbath after touching so close upon the subject, we may infer with at least equal propriety, that he knew it was to be abrogated; otherwise, it is most probable, he would at once have confirmed it on this occasion *.

In our Lord's conversations with the Pharisees, it appears, that he studiously avoided giving them any express intimations regarding the Sabbath day: and, when pressed as to the propriety of the manner in which it was observed by the Jews, he simply gave them an answer to their questions, by saying: "It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath day." But in St. John's Gospel we have an account of a circumstance, which, if applied to the view I have taken of my subject, seems not

* Is not this an answer to all Mr. Burnside advances as to the first day? for every commandment in the Decalogue is preserved in the Gospel, except that of keeping the Sabbath on the seventh day. (See Supposed Repeal of the Seventh Day, p. 150, 151, etc.). Indeed he seems doubtful as to his opinions, which is proved by his own words.

less correct than remarkable. At a pool near the sheep-market in Jerusalem, which was called Bethesda, wherein the impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, went for the cure of their diseases, a certain man was there, who had an infirmity thirty and eight years: "When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked. And on the same day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, take up thy bed and walk."—"Afterwards Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing

come unto thee. The man departed and told the Jews, that it was Jesus which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, *because he had done these things on the Sabbath day.* But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had *not only broken the Sabbath,* but said also, that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

The verse, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," Dr. Whitby paraphrases thus: "even from the time he rested from the works of the creation, continuing to preserve and govern all things he created, and do those things, which tend to his glory, and to the good of his creatures, even on the Sabbath day; and in imitation of him I do my wondrous works of mercy to the glory of his name upon that day; which being divine, and done by his power and assistance, show, that I do nothing in them contrary to his will." Now this, I say, was but the usual

manner, in which our Lord began to "*unloose the bands of Moses.*" For what things did God at any time upon the Sabbath, which were not directed to enforce a strict observance of it? And although, I am aware, it is evident in the gospel, that Jesus wished to teach them in what spirit the sanctity of a Sabbath day consisted with regard to its observance, yet still I think, our Lord, in abruptly saying, "my Father worketh hitherto, and I work," evinced such a total disregard to the feelings of the Jews upon the occasion, as can be accounted for only by his intention to change the day very soon afterward. Besides, all these works "to the glory of His name" do not appear to have been in necessitous cases: for the impotent man, or the man with the leprosy, or he with the withered hand, having been in that condition a long time, could not have experienced any disadvantage or danger by one day's delay; though I do not find these facts thus particularly noticed by the few commentators I have been able to search. Bishop Beveridge, whose paraphrase, I perceive, is

used in the Testament edited by Drs. D'Oyly and Mant, approaches much nearer to the point, in saying, "My Father, the Creator and Governor of the world, ever has done whatsoever he pleased, and whensoever he hath pleased; and I, the eternal son and wisdom of the Father, always work together with him."

As I have already said, I must say again, that there was no necessity for the immediate cure of these impotent folk upon the Sabbath. Jesus therefore must have had some particular design in these acts beside the glory of God. If then God, according to the Scriptures, *had taught the Jews formerly a very rigid adherence to the observance of the Sabbath*, and in so doing had performed "WHATsoever he pleased;" but now in his Son, "WHENsoever he pleased," had chosen to break in upon this ordinance, which He had *never* done before; it is more than probable, with the institution of the Christian Church in anticipation, he intended, in this gentle method "to take off the weight and yoke of" an ordinance, which was but

a shadow of that which was to be, and was to serve but for a time. Beyond this, I would paraphrase the words thus: "My Father hath hitherto worked, and done according as he hath determined: it is now my time (unto whom He hath given 'all authority and power') to work according as I please." Thus intimating, that, if He pleased to change the observance of the Sabbath according to the Law of Moses, he might do so. Such also I conceive to be the meaning of our Lord's saying, that he was "Lord also of the Sabbath." Let it not be objected, as it has recently again been, that our Lord desired his disciples to pray, that their flight from Jerusalem might not be on a Sabbath day. This was no confirmation of the obligation of the old Sabbath upon Christians; because it was in reference alone to the strict manner in which the Jews observed their Sabbath, not even fighting on that day in self-defence, and limiting a journey on that day to about a mile; whence it was likely, had the Christians attempted to break through their superstitions, they would inevitably

have brought upon themselves the punishment of Sabbath breakers, who were stoned to death. Bishop Porteus observes: "This kind admonition of our Saviour was not lost upon the disciples. For we learn from the best ecclesiastical historians, that, when the Roman armies approached Jerusalem, all the Christians left that devoted city, and fled to Pella, a mountainous country, and to other places beyond the river Jordan." Josephus testifies the same. Besides, it is allowed by all writers, that, after the Ascension, the first day of the week, together with the seventh, was held sacred by Christians; and if so, the Christians must have derived the observance of the first day by decree or ordinance from the apostles, who themselves kept it. Neither does the decision of ancient councils affect the question, if it be proved, that the Lord's Day was devoted to public worship by the apostles, for this is sufficient evidence of its establishment as the Sabbath. (See Dr. Whitby's note, page 204.)

In this place I have to introduce a few observations, as brief as I can, upon Mr. Burnside's new work on the Sabbath, it being professedly written against the observance of the LORD'S DAY. At the conclusion of his article on the "Supposed Repeal of the Seventh-day Weekly Sabbath," he has this passage: "It is true, the obligation to sanctify the seventh part of time might exist, and consequently continue, if reason supported it, without the commandment. But in that case the fourth commandment would have nothing to do with it. It might also be renewed by the Divine Being, either by institution of it abstractedly, no day being named in particular, or by instituting a specific day, as was done at the Creation; and I say nothing at present whether this has, or has not, been done in the case of the first day. But if it be so, the fourth commandment cannot, with propriety, any more than any other essentially amended or altered law, be considered in its present state as obligatory upon Christians. Before the words relative to the mode of keeping holy the

Sabbath day can be used, ‘ the seventh part of time,’ or ‘ the first,’ for instance, must be substituted for the *seventh:* and instead of the reason now given in the commandment for the divine institution of the seventh day, the following, or some such words, must be introduced: ‘ for the sanctification of the seventh part of time is requisite for the purposes of civilization, humanity, morality, and religion: therefore the Lord, etc.’; or thus: ‘ for the Lord Jesus Christ, having died for our sins, rose from the dead on the first day: therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.’

“ Whether the commandment would remain the same in substance with either of these alterations; whether the apostles have sanctioned either; or whether a real Christian can, without such a sanction, adopt either of them, must be left to every one’s conscience to determine.

“ At all events, the Sabbatarian * possesses this

* One who observes the seventh day, Mr. Burnside intends. —Editor.

important advantage, that when he is present at church, and hears the solemn recital of the fourth commandment, as now binding upon Christians, he can, with the utmost sincerity toward God and man, unite with the congregation in praying, 'Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.'"

I have made this long quotation, because it contains what is adduced as the strongest objection to the observance of the first day of the week. I apprehend it, however, to be an objection without any force at all. For, at the most, it does but impugn the discernment and prudence of those pious divines who composed our Liturgy, and thought proper to take into it that which was not delivered authoritatively by the Almighty to Christians, but only to the Israelites.

The Christian Church, being a church distinct from the Jewish hierarchy, had a right, under the sanction of our Lord, to whom the kingdom of God was then assigned, which sanction the apostles had, to appoint whatever day they pleased,

for the public worship of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. But it appears in the writings of the Evangelists, that our Lord did think proper to sanction expressly all the commandments delivered at Sinai, with the singular exception of the seventh day; concerning which he said nothing, save what tended gently to prepare the people for a change in the public day of worship. Then the question of the propriety of mentioning the Sabbath on the seventh day in our church service remains. That the sincerity of those who observe the Lord's Day is not slurred by the response they make to the fourth commandment, we have seen before; and the propriety of retaining the form of the commandments as they are in our Church exists in this, that at the time the Liturgy was composed, it would have been impolitic to have inserted any other: that it was necessary to convince Christians, that one day should be set apart for public worship and rest, as the example of the Almighty, in his decrees to mankind originally, and to the

Hebrews afterward at Sinai, showed, to remind them of the institution of religion, and the origin of it, together with the obligations they are under to the CREATOR: and lastly, as the Lord's Day is one day in seven, or the seventh day after six of labour, Christians do, from their heart, look upon the Lord's Day as the seventh, upon which they are to keep their Sabbath, and worship God; and therefore, as they do assemble for worship one day in seven, because God in the beginning ordered it, they may, with sincerity, make the response to the fourth commandment which they are accustomed to do; although, in fixing their Sabbath on the Lord's Day, or the first of the week, they commemorate not only circumstances connected with Christianity, but, as others have observed, likewise the creation of a new world, in Christ's kingdom, and a new rest *.—"But we Christians have reasons still stronger than the Jews had, for the faithful dedication of this day to the purposes for

* See the commentators upon the Epistle to the Hebrews.

which it was designed, because we thus commemorate the greatest blessing under the Gospel—the resurrection from death to life eternal. This was the era of a new creation, well deserving continual remembrance."—" In this day the Gentile may find rest from idolatrous sacrifice, the Jew from the works of the Law." Nor can I perceive any equivocation in this mode of explaining our observation of the fourth commandment; for, if there be, then may it also be said, that we equivocate in our worship of the Deity, in saying, " O Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world;" when, in fact, we intend Jesus Christ.

Mr. Burnside expresses doubts, " whether any thing short of direct evidence regarding the institution of the Lord's Day will suffice." Why he should do so, unless from prejudice, I do not understand. St. Luke has told us, that ordinances and decrees were made by the apostles and elders, which were delivered to the Christian converts to keep; but he has not informed us what these

were: and *supposing* the apostles did not institute the first day as the Sabbath, yet their successors, if no day in Christ's Church had been fixed, being vested with the same authority, might afterward do so. Now, as he left all these to be inferred, the best ground we can have is custom; and as we find both the seventh and the first day were very early observed as Sabbaths by Christians, as soon, indeed, as it was reasonably prudent, it is not a forced inference, that the Christians would observe that day as a Sabbath, which the apostles and elders had appointed; and therefore, as they did observe the first day, no doubt it was by their sanction, and probably contained in those written decrees, of which we have no full or accurate account. Cain's and Abel's sacrifices we believe to have been ordained by the Almighty, though it is only from inference; no positive evidence of it being to be had. Mr. Burnside says, "It does not follow, that the ancients, before the time of Abraham, sacrificed without the divine authority, from our not being informed of it, when it does

not concern us to know. But it does concern us to know the ground of the first day's claim." This is an unfair and subtle evasion; because, whether we be concerned or not, the question as to the matter of fact remains. Concerning the expression in John, xx. 26, "After eight days," he says, "it does not appear, that the disciples met by the order of Christ, or that they expected him." Now, the very contrary of this is to be observed. Thomas, who was not with the disciples on the first day of the week, when Jesus, after the resurrection, came among them, at a subsequent opportunity, before the next first day, was told of the resurrection by his brethren. But he would not believe it, unless he himself saw Jesus. Accordingly, what does the Evangelist next relate? "After eight days *again* his disciples were within, and Thomas with them." This he says to show, that Thomas was there only in expectation of seeing Jesus, as is intimated by his previous conversation, and our Lord's rebuke to him at this time.

It is worthy of remark, also, that on the first

day of the previous week our Lord was pleased personally to sanction their meeting on that day, by ordaining many, if not all, of those who were present, for the immediate and requisite work of the ministry, in his new Church, until the descent of the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost, should take place. See John, xx. 19—23.

Mr. Burnside says too, that the Christians being first called by this name at Antioch furnished the fairest opportunity for mentioning the new Sabbath, which had never yet been noticed. Now I infer from this circumstance, that their observing the first or Lord's Day as a Sabbath contributed to the occasion of their being designated Christians; which opinion is strengthened by the words already quoted from Pliny's letter to the emperor Trajan. Again, with respect to the Gospel, its imperfections or omissions, these prove nothing against the institution. Thus, for instance, St. Paul tells the Corinthians, "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." Yet we

find no such ordinance recorded by the Evangelists. And it is clear, that our Lord gave minute instructions personally to his apostles concerning the regulation of his Church, of which, in their writings, we should have had no account at all, had not certain circumstances occurred to introduce them. But to refute a writer, who founds his arguments on omissions in the writings of others, but will not admit this in others; who uses the authority of ancient writers, and disallows it when produced against himself, is scarcely worth the trouble.

While Mr. Burnside relies *entirely on omission*, he never once insinuates, that our Lord confirmed in his Church the observance of the Jewish Sabbath day as a Sabbath for us. He says, "There is no information how the disciples at Troas, and the apostles, spent the rest of that day; much less is there any account how the Christians in other places spent any part of it, or how any of them employed the preceding or subsequent days. Yet such information is absolutely

necessary in a case, where a new Sabbath is to be proved by apostolic example." This is certainly erroneous; for custom arises from example, and needs not confirmation by the pen. He considers Acts, xx. 7, concerning the breaking of bread, as no proof of the institution of the first day as the Sabbath; opposing to it Acts, ii. 46. Now, at the beginning, the Christians, having all things in common, is sufficient to account for their breaking bread every day; but then they did it "*from house to house, and did eat their meat with singleness of heart.*" This they could not have done, had they been celebrating the sacrament: for, in Acts, xx. 7, they neither went from house to house, nor did they eat meat: but "upon the first day, when the disciples *came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them,* ready to depart on the morrow;" and I have no doubt the sacrament was administered every Lord's Day at the beginning. "Going from house to house" signifies no more than passing their days in close social intercourse; but, when they come together,

on a set day, to break bread, the circumstance wears a different aspect; and when we know, that within six years of St. John the Evangelist's death the Christians assembled for the sacrament on a set day; and from Justin Martyr, who wrote within forty years after the same time, that it was on a Sunday; no doubt can remain, as to this meeting on the first day; and that it was not of the same nature, as when they broke bread, and *ate meat* from house to house.

All writings are liable to interpolation, misconstruction, etc.; while a custom, not confined to individuals, but observed by a community in succession, a custom of a serious nature, like the observance of the Lord's Day, is not likely to err.

Neither does this sentiment annihilate the doctrine, that the Scriptures are a rule of faith and practice, perfect, so far as moral and pious duties are concerned; but not in any wise intended to be opposed to those positive institutions, which are either derived from the apostles, or framed by their successors, or those which may be established

by them. Tradition and custom are very different. Tradition implies simply a current story, or relation handed down to posterity orally: custom is an act observed from generation to generation; and there must have been some foundation for its origin. The Lord's Day was a positive duty, observed before it was enforced by the civil power. It was a duty commanded not by one head of the Church, but by all, or at least by a majority. Mr. Burnside argues upon *tradition* to refute *custom*, which is clearly of more weight than tradition.

With regard to the expression in the Revelation of St. John, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day," the latter phrase, Mr. Burnside says, was interpolated * about the time of Constantine the Great; because St. Ignatius, the contemporary of the apostle John for thirty years, and his disciple,

* "The manuscripts to which we have access are not older than about the sixth century. Their containing the passage in question, therefore, by no means convinces me, that the apostle John wrote it." Burnside's Remarks, p. 206. The critical reader will judge how far prejudice would dictate an acknowledgment like the above!

when he urged the Christians, in the *strongest terms*, to show particular regard to the first day, in honour of Christ's resurrection, never once pleads the authority and example of his master for the practice; neither does he quote that passage for it.

To do so was unnecessary, for doubtless St. Ignatius set them an example himself in the duty he was inculcating; and it was unlikely he should refer to a manuscript, which was written only in 95, or 96, was not common among them, was not understood, and was not the WRITTEN DECREES which had already been delivered to the churches. Nor is it probable, that the early Christians would admit of an interpolation, to please Constantine; neither would it have been of any use, in the presence of the known decrees of the elders, which only governed the church, and which were made, according to St. Luke, not long after the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and before the meeting of the disciples at Jerusalem had broken up; consequently, long before the

time of Constantine. St. Ignatius must have urged the duty upon some authority, with which his not stating it proves, that the Christians whom he addressed were acquainted, or what he said as an individual would have had little weight with them. St. Ignatius calls the first day the Lord's Day; it matters not whence, whether from conversing with St. John, or having seen the expression in the writings of the latter, or in the decrees: and the concurrent voice of a large majority of writers on this subject in favour of the institution of this day, is preferable to that of the few, of whom some certainly from prejudice, some from interest, and some from ignorance, have advanced the contrary opinion.

With respect to this specious, but, as I conceive, unsound reasoning of Mr. Burnside, it should be carefully observed, that the Mosaic history was written after the Law had been in force among the Israelites; and written by the express command of the Almighty, *purposely* to contain the decrees of God as to that church erected by him-

self ; but the writings of the Evangelists were voluntary accounts, as St. Luke says, which the individual writers thought proper to give of the life of our Saviour; and were never intended to be the positive records of the decrees of the Christian church; which, indeed, would have been superfluous, as these decrees appear to have been made and *written* BEFORE these narratives, and *delivered* to the churches ; consequently were separate and distinct from them, and the only body of laws by which the churches were regulated.

I have had no opportunity to search whether any traces or remains of these decrees are in existence. Decrees there were, for they are mentioned both by St. Luke and by St. Paul; which proves, that it is not essential for us to find in the narratives of the sacred writers of the New Testament any direct account of the institution of the first day of the week as our Sabbath ; consequently Mr. Burnside's strained arguments upon this omission in the Gospel, I think, completely fail in refuting the custom of observing the Lord's Day, as

an apostolical injunction sanctioned by our Lord. With deference too to several of the Fathers, and others who have preceded Mr. Burnside, and spoken in a very inconsiderate manner of this institution, I consider it to be equally erroneous in them to look for THE INSTITUTION of the Christian Sabbath, either in the Gospels or in the Epistles, which were written for other special purposes while these decrees were in existence. Reference to it accidentally might or might not occur; and if it did not, its establishment is therefore not disproved by the omission.

Moreover, when St. Luke informs us, that he wrote the Acts of the Apostles because others had written on the like subject, and in the course of his narrative relates the institution of the CHRISTIAN DECREES, he obviously leaves the reader to refer TO THESE, as his guide in the ecclesiastical customs of the Christian Church.

The designation given to the first day of the week, the LORD'S DAY, is remarkable; and leads us to observe upon the propriety of the day for the

assembling of Christians in the public worship of Almighty God. It is natural to suppose, that, as our Lord was born, rose from the dead, and sent down the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, on the first day of the week, and ordained many on that day, previous to his ascension, the apostles and primitive Christians would ever afterward hold it in especial remembrance. But how came it to be called the *Lord*'s Day? St. John certainly is the first of the sacred writers who so mentions it. He says, "I was in the spirit on the LORD's Day;" as if it were a day peculiar to Jesus Christ, either selected by Him, for some purpose or other, or otherwise appropriated to Him.

Indeed, the expression of "the Lord's Day" is similar to one we meet with frequently in the Old Testament, which is, "if ye keep MY *Sabbath*." In this manner the Almighty is invariably represented speaking of the seventh day; and from this alone we might believe, without farther information, it had its origin from God. So, from St. John, a holy writer's, designating the first day

of the week as the LORD'S DAY, we are left to conclude it was a day marked out by the Lord himself for some express and peculiar object. Being so selected by Jesus Christ, the subsequent use made of it by his disciples evinces, that it was designed for the worship of God—(see Dr. Whitby's notes). A little before the ascension, the Lord commanded the apostles to tarry while at Jerusalem; and on the day of Pentecost, when they were assembled in prayer, He caused the Holy Spirit to light upon them; thus he sanctioned a second time their worship of the Deity upon this day in a public manner, and consequently the day itself also used for the purpose. His second appearance to them after the resurrection was upon the first day of the week, when they were assembled together, in all likelihood in prayer. So that, when we contemplate the abrogation of the Law, the prophecies and types concerning the Messiah Christ, the fulfilment of all these in Him upon a certain day; and that from these facts, especially the last, our doctrines and faith have

their birth and support; we must be very insensible of the benefits conferred thereby, if we can set apart days for the celebration of victories achieved, and temporal deliverances accomplished, and not commemorate, in a solemn and sacred manner, that day which beheld the cross of Christ triumphant over death and the grave, and the atonement for the sins of the world consummated in Him. It is the duty of Christians, therefore, to devote this day to the public worship of God in the Holy Trinity, the day upon which he vouchsafed, so wonderfully as he did, to confirm his divinity, the truth of his preaching, and his mission: upon his death and burial our hopes of immortality hung, in comparison, but slightly, though full of intense anxiety and interest; yet when His resurrection and appearance previous to the ascension took place, and the Holy Ghost subsequently descended on the apostles, according to His promise, every doubt was dissipated, and our belief confirmed, that He was, and is, the Lord and Giver of life and immortality, and that, in the

last day, it is He, the righteous Judge, who shall come to judge the world.

These are the various considerations that prove the Lord's day to have been instituted by the Apostles as THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH. I have, therefore, only to add, that to Christians I trust the first day of the week has been shown to have claims sufficient for such great distinction from all other days, peculiar claims, that cannot attach to any day but this.

PART VI.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH SHOULD BE KEPT, THE EVILS OF DISREGARDING IT, AND THE DUTY OF ITS OBSERVANCE.

As the Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day, is most generally known by the name of Sunday, it may not be improper briefly to mention the origin of this name. By the Romans the first day of the week was called *Dies Solis*, because it was dedicated to the worship of the Sun; and for the same reason our Saxon ancestors gave to it the name of *Sunnan Dæeg*, or Sun's day, which it still retains; but to the Jews it was only known as "one of the Sabbath, or the first of the Sabbath."

Although from the time of the apostles the first day of the week seems to have been selected for especial veneration, it was not till the reign

of Constantine the Great, that a regular celebration of this day was established *by public decree.* In the year of our era 321, Constantine enacted, that the first, or our Lord's Day, should be kept as the day of rest in all cities and towns throughout the Roman empire, though he permitted the country people to follow their necessary avocations. Theodosius the Great, A. D. 386, prohibited all public shows; and Theodosius the Younger, some few years after, confirmed this decree, extending its operation to all Jews, Pagans, etc.; and to evince his sincere desire of honouring the day, he decreed, that, whenever the anniversary of his inauguration should occur on a Sunday, it should be celebrated on the day following. In A. D. 517, it was ordained by a council of the fathers of the church, that on Sunday no causes should be heard or decided upon; though, before this period, the Christians, in opposition to the old Roman custom, used this and all other days throughout the year alike for hearing causes of a peculiar tendency, such as emancipating of slaves,

etc. In 538, the council of Orleans restricted the people from all kinds of work, and prohibited travelling with horses or otherwise, even for the purposes of health or procuring food.

In our own country king Athelstan, who about the year 940 caused the Scriptures to be translated into the Saxon language, which was then the vulgar tongue, imposed very heavy fines and severe penalties upon every person trafficking on this day. A. D. 960, Edgar ordained, that the Sunday should be kept holy in England from Saturday at three o'clock in the afternoon till Monday at daybreak. Henry the sixth, by statute, forbade any fairs or markets to be held on any Sunday, the four in harvest excepted. Charles the first prohibited all persons from going out of their own parishes on Sunday for any sport whatever; and strictly forbade their attending any bear or bull-baiting, dramatic exhibitions, &c., even in their own parishes; though it would appear, that innocent amusements were admitted in their own parishes after the hours of public worship. During

the Usurpation, so great was the fanaticism of the people, that they affected to make all days alike; considering it unnecessary to set apart any particular time to exercise and improve themselves in godliness; still, however, there was a nominal Sabbath, though the most bigoted persisted, that under the New Testament all days were equally sacred to a Christian. Charles the Second not only prohibited any works, excepting those of charity and necessity, but imposed forfeitures upon the sale of any goods, meat in public houses and milk excepted. The licentious and dissolute manners of that reign, however, would argue the cause of this regulation to have sprung from an opposition to the puritanical extreme of Cromwell's time, rather than from any more praiseworthy motive. In later periods the legislature has often had the profanation of this day under consideration, and many salutary laws have been passed; but it is to be regretted, that the regulations, which have taken place, have not tended to bring the day generally into that state of proper observance, so

essentially necessary, not only as it respects the awful duty we owe to the Deity, but even for the civil and moral purposes of life.

From the earliest periods of Christian history Sunday has been distinguished by a peculiar reverence and respect; and the laws of the land have been suspended for the day, except in cases of felony, so that, worldly concerns not claiming attention, no obstruction may arise to the performance of its sacred duties. I am indebted for these concise remarks to a useful work little known except to the subscribers to it *, and considered them a necessary introduction to what I shall say on the employment of the Lord's Day.

After what has been advanced respecting the observance of the Sabbath among the Jews, much need not be said in regard to the utility of the institution of the Lord's Day; but something more may be requisite as to the obligation of keeping it holy.

* Clavis Calendaris, 2 vols. 8vo.

If in the beginning a day in each week were set apart to commemorate the birth of the world, before man fell from his first estate, or immediately afterward, it is evidently necessary, that those facts on which the Christian faith is built, however stupendous and notorious they might have been when they occurred, have a peculiar claim to a frequent commemoration. The world itself, with its productions coming regularly in succession according to the seasons, must continually remind man of its originating from a First Great Cause; a fact that we might now think could never have been forgotten: but the death and resurrection of our Lord, his ascension into Heaven, and the subsequent diffusion of the Holy Spirit upon those who were present at the erection of Christ's catholic church, being facts no longer visible when once past, might easily perish from the memory of mankind amid their natural depravation and corruption, without some stated commemoration of them.

But that neither the seasons nor the works of

the creation were sufficient to impress on men's minds the origin of the world, is seen in the idolatry, that arose and extended itself over the globe. Hesiod in his Theogony begins with the first principles of the heathen system, that Chaos was the parent of all, and Heaven and Earth the parents of all visible things. That Heaven is the father, says Plutarch in his inquiry after God, appears from his pouring down the waters, which have the spermatic faculty, and Earth the mother, because she brings forth. According to lord Bacon these accounts were handed down by tradition from time immemorial. Notwithstanding the heathen poets *invented* not of themselves the notion of a future state and the immortality of the soul, but founded them on such a tradition, still the idolatry, which has prevailed, showed manifestly enough, that the creation remained no standing memorial to mankind of the All-wise Creator.

The utility of the observation of the Lord's Day must therefore be obvious to the reader. Dr.

Butler in his Analogy says: "Nor must it by any means be omitted, *for it is a thing of the utmost importance*, that life and immortality are eminently brought to light by the Gospel. The great doctrines of a future state, the danger of a course of wickedness, and the efficacy of a repentance, are not only confirmed in the Gospel, but are taught, especially the last is, with a degree of light, to which that of nature is but darkness.

"Farther; as CHRISTIANITY served these ends and purposes, when it was first published, by the miraculous publication itself; *so it was intended to serve the same purposes in future ages, by means of the settlement of a visible church; of a society distinguished from common ones, and from the rest of the world, by peculiar religious institutions; by an instituted method of instruction, and an instituted form of external religion.* Miraculous powers were given to the first preachers of Christianity, in order to their introducing it into the world. A visible church was established, in order to continue it, and carry it on successively

through all ages. Had Moses and the prophets, Christ and His apostles, only taught, and by miracles proved, religion to their contemporaries, the benefit of their instructions would have reached but to a small part of mankind. Christianity must have been, in a great degree, sunk and forgot in a very few ages. To prevent this, appears to have been one reason why a visible church was instituted: to be, like a city upon a hill, a standing memorial to the world of the duty, which we owe our Maker: to call men continually, both by example and instruction, to attend to it; and by the form of religion ever before their eyes, remind them of the reality: to be the repository of the oracles of God: to hold up the light of revelation in aid to that of nature, and propagate it throughout all generations to the end of the world."

In the above comprehensive language Dr. Butler sums up the use of the Christian institution, and from considerations like these we are led to observe the utility of the Lord's Day, the useful-

ness of a Christian Sabbath. It is, as I have elsewhere mentioned, "the bulwark of religion:" but the great use of it is, that "*the gospel may be preached unto the poor*," that the wise may be "*made better to understand.*" For these purposes it is needful, that there should be some set time and day, which should be established and fixed in the Church, so that, the business of this life being suspended, neither the poor nor rich can frame any excuse for not attending to instruction in their religion, having no secular claims upon them for their services. And, since the day is but short-lived, and "the fields already white for the harvest," it becomes requisite, that they who form a neighbourhood should assemble together at set times during this day, to hear the words of the minister in Christ's Church, in some place exclusively devoted to his worship.

In being made a day of general rest, it invigorates the spirits of far the greater portion of the community; and enables them, as week after week rolls on, to pass their lives cheerfully beneath the

toil of earning their daily bread. It cultivates the kind and social feelings of mankind, by its intervention allaying the irritations of this life, and affording "the poorer families of the Earth" opportunity to meet occasionally, and cherish those domestic relations, which are the bonds of peace, of social order, and of religion in every country. There are other advantages in the Sabbath day, which naturally result from its appropriation, in tending to promote industry and cleanliness among the people. The Jews were ordered to wash the clothes in which they meant to appear on the Sabbath day; and we seem to have retained this very proper practice, which among the poor is a stimulus to exertion.

These considerations include a people; but the Sabbath has its utility to individuals, whose comfort, nay I hesitate not to say, whose prosperity in general, depends upon their due appropriation of it. If when two or three are gathered together the Almighty will deign to listen to the sons of men, may we not believe, that the Lord's Day is

one of special grace? and that God may be thought to sit on his mercy seat in a more gracious manner on this day than on others, listening to the prayers of thousands assembled in adoration of his Providence?

For individuals this day was designed as a blessing to the soul; that on it the soul may be called away from the hurry, tumult, and confusion of worldly concerns to spiritual and pious occupations, such as will lull and soften the passions of the heart, and improve the capacities of the mind for those intellectual enjoyments, which can dissipate sorrow, mitigate the severity of misery, and make the hope of immortality and happiness burn with greater brightness. It gives the Christian opportunity to reflect upon the resurrection of Him, who died and rose again for man's justification before a once offended Providence; and who by ascending to the Father verified the immortality of the soul. It is therefore obvious, that we should be engaged throughout the whole of the Sabbath day in some instructive employments connected with these sub-

jects, which may lift the soul out of sin, exalt it to a nearer similitude and union with its Maker, and so prepare it for the realms of eternal bliss. To recommend, as part of the occupation of this day, attendance at the morning and afternoon or evening worship of God, sounds unnecessary; but this is far from being the case; and it is incumbent on the well-bred and educated classes of society, to set others an example in this important duty. In the intervals between the services there is ample time for a gentle walk: but in the evening one in a family ought to read some book suitable for the day to the whole household. Let it not be thought, that the fulfilment of this duty will detract from the dignity of any situation, for our Saviour deemed it not unworthy even of Himself; or render us spiritless and dull individuals in the minds of the good and learned: and if among the fashionably bad it should happen to have this effect, their opinion ought not to affect us, worthless as it is, in comparison with the testimony the Almighty gave of his approbation to those who

were careful over their households, as related in Scripture, which should make us resolute in persisting in this duty. Many are the works that might profitably be read to a family on this day. I do not name any in particular, as the contents of this work will be read only by those who can prudently select for themselves; and, if not, the district committees belonging to the Society for promoting Christian knowledge would recommend and supply such as are proper for the purpose. In this manner Christians should pass the Lord's Day; and when and where it is not thus set apart, we see, for the fact is too glaring to be veiled, that a general indifference to morality succeeds among the lower and middling classes, as well as above them, and the principles of the community are loosened.

Perhaps I urge the obligation of the observance of this day too much as depending upon the political use of it; but I will also support it upon stronger grounds.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy *," are the words of the commandment, which the Scriptures instruct man "to lay up in his heart and in his soul, and bind them upon the hand, that they may be as frontlets between his eyes. To teach them to his children, speaking of them when he sitteth in his house, and when he walketh by the way; when he lieth down, and when he rises up." But the individuals are numerous, who, notwithstanding this scripture, very seldom bestow even a thought upon the subject, and are guilty of shameful inattention to this sacred day, *a day now hallowed in its observance by the sanction of so many ages as have passed by.* It is an *evil*, for such it may be correctly called, which has hitherto produced an insensibility to the duties of religion wherever it has prevailed; and it is to be found, not only among the low and ignorant, but among persons of education, rank, and learning.

* The application of these words is just, when what has previously been said on *the Sabbath* is considered.

To what cause must we attribute that open neglect of religion, which is too visible to be denied, From some source or other it must arise; and as the stream of the purest fountain may be polluted in the channels through which it glides, I cannot help suspecting it to proceed from that Religious Liberty, which we feel and enjoy: for it is not new in the history of man, that, in cases where blessings have been bestowed, they have been disregarded or abused; of which ancient and modern history afford several remarkable examples. Religious freedom assuredly ought never to be abridged: the GOSPEL was not founded or propagated with the sword and fire in heathen climes, but forced its way peaceably through perverse, wicked, and idolatrous generations, till it rose into that extensive visible Church, which we annually learn is diffusing itself over all the world. Yet, in proportion to the freedom we possess in religious concerns, the more aggravated becomes the sin of neglecting them. It must be acknowledged, that the harshness, the hypocrisy, which have been

discovered among many, who, in aspiring to become as wise as serpents, lose the innocence of the dove; and the extreme restrictions (for it is not discipline) and over-zeal of some Christians may and have driven others entirely away from public worship; and, by misguided endeavours to reform, hurried them into the contrary extreme, licentiousness. Independently too of the errors and mischiefs which hasty and inconsiderate individuals have created, with Religious Liberty has been engendered a slothful indifference to religion generally, much more dangerous to society, to our happiness here, and our salvation hereafter, than the overheated spirit of those, who go rushing on with a "zeal not according to knowledge."

But if the lettered page, which tells the annals of the past, relate its tale correctly, such ought not to be the case; for that affords a striking contrast between the days, comparatively, when we are speaking of important periods, not long since past, and those now present.

In those dark and melancholy times, when per-

secution haunted true religion in the dwellings of the laity; when the errors, superstitions, and zeal, which the avarice of the church of Rome created, were spread among its votaries in this country, INDIFFERENCE TO RELIGION WAS UNKNOWN; and the sincere Christian, I may say, panted for true religion, and longed publicly to confess the true faith; but then was it also, that in secret, oftentimes in a state of solitude and fear, he was obliged to steal his hour, when he wished to worship in the spirit and in truth; or meditate on that Sacred Book, whereon our Holy Faith will for ever rest. That volume, which contains the words of eternal life, if then discovered in the possession of a layman, was directly converted into his death-warrant; and he was hurried either to the scaffold or the flames, there to expiate his crime, as the priesthood called it, of searching those Scriptures, which were written for our instruction, and which we are commanded by our Lord to examine. One alternative certainly was left to save him from destruction; but an alternative to a

noble soul as terrible as the death threatened to be inflicted. He was permitted, nay, he was importuned, to become a convert to papal superstitions; and, denying the true faith, to place his reliance for mercy and salvation, not upon God, but upon the frail and arbitrary judgment of that long foretold potentate, the pope.

This is the picture of past times portrayed by history: and now, when religious liberty is established, every one in the undisturbed possession of the Gospel and exercise of his faith, the Scriptures, as easy of access to the laity as to the priesthood, to the lowest as to the highest, how many thoughtless persons in this enlightened country, notwithstanding the attainment of such a blessing, leave them thrown aside in neglect, and absent themselves from public worship! Our forefathers, contending for the devout observance of this day, thought it their duty and glory to fight and die for the Gospel, for "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints;" and, having gained the jewel for which they had long struggled, bequeathed

it to us as one of inestimable value. Though many are those who become unworthy of this treasure, by treating with contempt the sacred obligations of their religion.

Is this, however, the only cause of our Sabbath being disregarded, as well by the poor as by the rich? Certainly not; the blind must have a guide to lead them on their way. But the heads of families having ceased to perform daily prayer among their households, their minds are abstracted by worldly matters from all recollections of religion during *six* days in the week, whence they become careless and indifferent to it on the seventh day, on our Sabbath. "How changed," as the learned Dr. Rennel writes, "is this modern system of life from that of our forefathers; who, with a patriarchal and primeval dignity, called together in the mornings and in the evenings their whole families to adore and praise the Supreme Being for their creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, as also for the means and for the hope of glory in the next!" What, if the above be not

the "*fons et origo mali*," the source of this corruption, can have "obliterated that beautiful system of piety which distinguished them, and was considered the ornament of their lives? lessons of spiritual instruction, exhortation, and reproof are seldom to be heard" in families, while religion, seemingly exiled from the company of elders, is banished to seminaries for children, or reserved for a few hours' display in some instances, or edification in others, on one day only during the week. Indeed, I am much inclined to think, that the effect of the national education system and the distribution of the Scriptures is stayed or neutralized in an extensive degree, if not lost, upon this account.

Various amusements are preferred for closing the evenings, sometimes the nights, and ushering *in the mornings*, instead of assembling FINALLY to prayers; so that with bad example before them in one way, and the want of good example in another, many families are left entirely to the sway and indulgence of their natural inclinations, be-

come idle, negligent, and profane, and the domestics frequently treacherous and dishonest. The educated, therefore, who belong to our church particularly, ought to reflect and show their children and servants the regards and duties they owe to Almighty God in the first place, and then they will learn what they owe to their neighbour, and to mankind at large; keeping holy the LORD'S DAY by strict attention to public worship, and abstaining from light, worldly, and unprofitable amusements in improper hours; but above all, by a steady, well regulated, and unaffected zeal in their religion.

The best apology I have ever heard made for disregarding the Lord's Day, the only rational plea put forward in extenuation of it, is, when individuals say, that the temporal prospects and welfare of their *families* depend upon the additional labour of this day, and the result of its application to business. Upon consideration, this excuse cannot avail in the least degree. Alas! in the too eager and fatal pursuit of fortune, of pleasure, or

of fame, their years creep unheeded over them, and in later life they forget those obligations, which, in the days of their youth, they *learnt* to *know* and *feel* they were under to their Creator. They were then taught, that, as the example of their parents was a shining light, to guide them in the right way in their younger days, it was incumbent on them in maturity of life, to be a light, a friendly beacon, and an example, to their families, their neighbours, and their posterity, in keeping holy the LORD'S DAY: on this day neither to do any manner of work themselves, nor to suffer their sons or their daughters, their men-servants or their maid-servants, or their cattle, or the stranger who is within their gates, to follow their daily employments. I do not mean to say all manner of work can be avoided on this day; neither do I find any intimation of the kind in the preachings of Jesus Christ, or of his apostles. As much as can be omitted by masters themselves, and remitted their servants, ought to be so. In the time of Jesus Christ THE SABBATH was held so sacred, that a Sabbath day's journey

did not exceed a mile; and the pious Maries appear to have entertained the same concern for the Sabbath, when, rather than buy spices and ointment, even to embalm the body of our Lord, on the Sabbath, they went and fulfilled their intentions the morning previous to it.

Our Lord, in his meekness and humility, was above all unnecessary particularity in the establishment of his religion, and has taken care to signify to us clearly, by his own works and allusions to those of others, on what occasions the duties of the Lord's Day may be interrupted. For example: Our Saviour healed the sick on the Sabbath day, and addressed certain parables to the scribes and pharisees on the subject; from which we may assure ourselves it is lawful, to do that which is good and actually necessary on the Sabbath. The instances of leading cattle to water, the rescuing a sheep, which had fallen into a pit, are mentioned in the writings of the Evangelists *as cases of this nature*, in which we may do work on the Lord's Day.

But can a Christian honestly assert, that the welfare of his family hangs solely on the issue of one day's work? in fact, *depends upon the violation of the Sabbath?* If it were probable, nay, granting that his worldly advantage might suffer by its observance, it must be but in a slight degree, as in the proportion of one to six. Supposing it were even in a greater than this, without adducing the example of the primitive Christians, I would beg him, for a few minutes, to listen to the language of that Gospel, by which he hopes hereafter to live in joy. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow me." For, "he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." "Whosoever will save his life" in this world "shall lose it" in the next; "but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" St. Luke goes so far as to say for our Lord, "If any man hate not his father and mother, he cannot

be my disciple;" but, plainly, it means no more than that, under no pretences of any kind, are the religious duties of a Christian to be sacrificed to the capricious disposal or will of others; a stronger illustration of which truth could not have been given. It was one wherein the kindred affections of the heart were excited and concerned, wherein every sympathetic feeling was aroused, that could justify, or palliate, if aught could do so, the violation of so solemn a duty, as the observance of the Lord's Day.

It is then almost unnecessary to remark, how much more unpardonable is the offence of those, who defile the Christian Sabbath, not for the sake of father, or mother, or sons, or daughters; but in worldly, unseasonable, and useless amusements; and it is very certain, that the blessings of God are frequently lost, for want of seeking them at those times, which he has appointed for the purpose. Indeed, without wild and fanciful delusions of the brain, if mankind will but watch the occurrences of life, they may see the providence of God

manifested in numberless instances. We are not without signal examples of it, related and confirmed upon good and indisputable authority; one of which I shall here insert, as it will serve to show, that Sabbath-breaking is often the forerunner of ill success in life, to those who are *otherwise well-behaved members of society.* It is related by an eminent, learned, and pious judge, a man who rose from a state of poverty to well earned wealth and rank in life, SIR MATTHEW HALE — "*I have found,*" says he, "*by a strict and diligent observation,* that a due observance of the duties of this day has ever had joined to it a blessing upon the rest of my time; and the week that hath been so begun has been blessed and prosperous to me. And on the other side when I have been negligent of the duties of this day, the rest of the week has been unsuccessful and unhappy to my secular employments. So that I could easily make an estimate of my successes in my daily concerns for the week following by the manner of my passing this day. AND THIS I DO NOT WRITE LIGHTLY

OR INCONSIDERATELY, BUT UPON LONG AND SOUND OBSERVATION AND EXPERIENCE." Thus wrote that excellent man to his children: from whose thoughts and opinions of the matter we may naturally be induced to conclude, that in this day are wrapped up the blessings or misfortunes of our lives; and that, as we remember it, to keep it holy, so in proportion does God remember us during the week following.

After such an opinion, I shall be pardoned, if I subjoin the remark of an anonymous author, taken from a work which was published a year or two ago in the metropolis of England, who appears to have had occasion to make the animadversions which he did. The intention of a Sabbath, he says, was not for man "to follow his mere vain and idle pursuits, but meant to influence him in bringing him to the acknowledgment of his dependence on Almighty Power, and thereby to secure that state of future blessedness, which is held out to him: and do we not *uniformly* find degeneracy of manners, and a contempt of all that

is good and sacred, to be the natural and inevitable consequence of neglecting it? But, as you justly observe, in our provincial towns we have not to contend with all that bad example, which is set by those of the most exalted rank in the metropolis. I believe, were my situation removed thither, that nothing would excite my detestation so much as this: for to what purpose is it, that we inveigh against the breach of this day, and against infringements of its sanctity, when we see nobles, and others of the principal people of the land, themselves the infractors of it; when we see them exhibiting to their inferiors the cold indifference and unconcern, with which they make their innovations upon it? One might think they were lost to the finer feelings of their nature, when the records of our courts bear testimony, that the majority of crimes which are punished, not unfrequently by death, have sprung from this one cause. Were they endued with the feelings of Christian charity, would they not forego the most powerful allurements which pleasure could offer,

when they know, that their baneful and pernicious example of neglecting the duties and observance of this day leads on so many of their fellow-creatures to their ruin? But awful as the consideration is, they do not reflect upon the consequences of their conduct; by which they practically manifest a determination neither to quench the splendour of the lamp, the joy of the harp, nor the conviviality of the feast, although there result from all this such crimes, as hurry on their fellow-creatures to an untimely and ignominious death." Surely what are termed quiet assemblies, conversaziones, small dinner and music parties, can never, by the distortions of any sophistry, be construed into any other than such flagrant breaches of what, if not actually sacred, is held by the wise and prudent as such, as would deserve, in any case, the severest reprehension.

I now terminate these thoughts on the Sabbath, calling to the reader's remembrance the testimony God bore to Abraham, as the good master of a family, for an example worthy of imitation; whose

religious care of his household was crowned with success and happiness in his son Isaac, and the chief servant of his house, Eleazar of Damascus: and on the other hand, it only remains for me, lastly, to join my humble protest against the mode in which many people occupy themselves on the Sabbath; and to call their attention to the *confessions* which are made at "this hour of the day" by criminals, who, about to be deprived of life by the laws of their country, have declared their ruin to have commenced in Sabbath-breaking. This fact ought to awaken the insensibility of those who are immersed in the greatest luxury *, and point out to them the reality of the evil, which ends or disturbs the lives of most with misfortune and unhappiness in one way or other, weakens the national principles of fidelity and industry, and prominently sanctions immorality.

* See the Rambler: Sunday, an Allegory.

SERMONS,

ETC.

SERMON I.

MALACHI, iii. 2.

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap.

IN these words the prophet declares the advent of some great person, together with the virtue and effect of it: the verse before the text is a prophecy of Christ's coming in the flesh, and is further illustrated by this signal evidence of a forerunner, viz. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." His work and office was to preach repentance from dead works, to dispose the minds of the Jews to receive the

Messiah, by his testimony, doctrine, example, and baptism, and by the whole course of his ministry, as a herald to usher in the birth of *Him*, who is "the desire of all nations."

It was now high time for the prophet to preach to the Jews the approaching day of the promised redemption, and the appearance of the perfect law-giver, and judge of his people; for errors and corruptions, both in doctrine and manners, were come to full maturity, and the priests, as well as the whole congregation of Judah, so grossly given to idolatry, that it was most reasonable to speak to them of Christ, who, as a purifier and refiner of his church, would quickly come into the world. "But who may abide the day of his coming?" says the prophet to the Jews, "and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:" i. e. since you have made yourselves so vile by your abominations, and the objects of God's justice and severity by profaning his holy things, and forsaking his commandments and ordinances, how will ye endure in the day

when the Messiah appeareth? how will *ye* (being all darkness) stand before the light and majesty of the Sun of Righteousness, the brightness of whose doctrine shall discover the very secrets of the heart, and bring every evil deed to judgment; his presence shall be attended with a most powerful virtue of God's Holy Spirit, which shall consume his enemies, and the kingdom of darkness shall fall before it.

In these words we have these two points for observation: 1st, That although our blessed Saviour condescended to be obscurely born, and to appear in the form of a man, yet he proved terrible to his enemies, when he refined and purified to himself a Church and People. 2d, That it was a time of great trial, who would believe unto life, or not believe unto their greater condemnation.

I. The nation of the Jews, at that time when our blessed Saviour was manifested in the flesh, had lost the sincerity of worship, the soundness of doctrine, and purity of conversation; so that the religion, then professed among them, seems to have

consisted of hypocrisy and traditions, and the laws of God to have been considered by them only binding the outward actions of men to a conformity, but laying no injunction upon their hearts to entertain thoughts only innocent and good. This we find to have been the case, in such places of the Gospel where our Saviour renders the true sense of the Law, and shows us how much it was misunderstood and perverted by the Jewish church at that time, which interpreted the laws of charity, chastity, and justice to have no other force or influence, than upon an external obedience. They had this gross and imperfect notion of the divine commandments, and consequently indulged themselves in all guile and lasciviousness which thought was capable of, and placed their sanctity and devotion in an outward and visible demeanour. Accordingly, we find that the most notorious and general sin among them was hypocrisy, which the Searcher of all hearts and the Author of truth frequently charged them with, and severely reproved in the chief persons: "Woe unto you, Sad-

ducees and Pharisees, hypocrites," was their common character; and he who knew all things, and to whom judgment belongeth, pronounced this woe against them on that account. His doctrine, therefore, came with great power and authority, crossed their vile affections, demolished their high thoughts and imaginations, denounced wrath against all impure desires, and unclean inclinations, or propensities to evil; his very word being an instrument of execution (Heb. iv. 12): "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

It could not fail to be terrible to them, when their consciences were awakened to conviction, when the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life, and the desire of the eyes were openly condemned; and when hypocrisy, violence, and profaneness were sentenced to future punishments. They were commanded to renounce their favourite evil habits, or

otherwise have their portion with devils; they must not entertain evil in their *minds*, upon peril of perishing everlastingly. Such sayings as these blasted the pretended perfection of the proud Pharisee, frustrated all his vain hopes of being justified by the works of the Law, and let him see, to his shame and confusion, that even they, who had been open sinners, and had truly repented, would enter into the kingdom of Heaven before such as he.

Besides, our Lord dissolved the moveable ordinances of the Jewish church, which consisted of outward rites and observances. He was the body and substance of all those shadows and figures, under which they and their forefathers were trained. Now all these must cease; their altar and temple must henceforward be common to all nations, who fear God and work righteousness; and every people, as well as they, may be an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. This rendered void all the changeable part of their law, which that wicked

and adulterous generation made their boast of, neglecting the weightier matters of judgment and mercy; and since these rites of Moses they were so fond of were to be done away, by that grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, their obstinacy and unbelief made them oppose the change with all possible fraud and cruelty, and thus they persisted to fight against God, to the utter overthrow of both their church and nation: an overthrow which hath fully answered what the prophet foretold, concerning the coming of Christ.

With relation to the Jews, it is to be reckoned from Christ's first preaching, till the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Then did they, in full measure, drink of the cup of God's wrath and heavy displeasure, which they had filled up for themselves: then did they meet with judgment without mercy, who had shown none to God's servants and prophets, no, not to the Son of God! The time does not permit me to tell you of the blood of the slain, and the miseries of the living; how the sword and famine broke in upon them

with equal fury, the enemy surrounding the city that none should escape, and violence and murder raging within the walls; one perishing by the hand of another, according to our Saviour's infallible prediction of it (Matt. xxiv. 21), "that, in those days, the tribulation shall be great, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

Hence it is evident, that the Messiah, Christ, the Son of the living God, did, even at his first coming, hold and exercise the authority and power of his Godhead over the enemies of his kingdom, both by way of doctrine and judgment; and yet, at the same time, was meek and lowly, to give the world an example; was merciful and compassionate towards those that were wearied with the burden of their sins, and believed in Him for righteousness and salvation. For although the text describes him as a judge and potentate, "Who can abide his coming, or stand when he appeareth?" it is not directed to the blasphemous and incorrigible Jew only, but to the hardness and impeni-

tency of every man who opposed him in the flesh; for this his appearance was powerful also in respect of the heathen world.

Almost the whole earth had for a long time been overflown with idolatry, adoring the creature instead of the Creator; but when Christ appeared as a light to the Gentiles, he dispersed these mists of ignorance and error. The heathens' worship, and the sacrifices which they offered to devils, did in a great measure cease; their most famous oracles were silenced; their idols fell down; and those accursed spirits, which deluded the world, were forced from their temples, when the eternal Word dwelt among men, and preached unto man the perfect will and truth of God.

Nothing less than a power divine could have gained such a victory, especially if we consider how strongly the Gospel was opposed; for the Jew stumbled at it, and it seemed foolishness to the Gentiles: both of them pleaded the right of antiquity, which was maintained by great wit and learning, and defended by the fiercest rigour and

cruelty of persecution. Yet all this force and policy could not keep them from falling: "Where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" says St. Paul. "God will set up a kingdom, and advance the sceptre of righteousness;" in vain, therefore, do they take counsel against the Lord and against his Christ; all contrary interests must fall before it, "all nations shall do him service;" and of his enemies the prophet David said, "Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." It is true the Scriptures describe the Messiah to be the desire of all nations; that he came into the world not to destroy but to save that which was lost; and the angel, which appeared to the shepherds, brought this message from Heaven, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." His coming forth from the Father was the greatest act of love and mercy that could be showed to "the sons of men:" in the purpose of God, the holy

child Jesus, our Saviour, was sent to redeem mankind, to reconcile them to God, and to bring men to the knowledge of the truth, that "none might perish, but have everlasting life through him." Now, as it was the rising of some, so, in the event, it proved the falling of others; and that which was designed for their salvation was made, by infidelity and impenitence, an occasion of falling, and also of aggravating their guilt and punishment: for the more fully and perfectly that God revealed himself and his mysteries, the more inexcusable they were, if they would not receive instruction and obey his will. Moses, therefore, prophesying of Christ, tells their fathers, by way of promise (Deut. xviii. 18), which place is quoted by St. Peter (Acts, iii. 22), "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." It were well, that when we enjoy the favour of

God, and see and taste his goodness and mercy, if we would also think of his majesty and justice. Let us apply to ourselves in some measure (for all these things are written for our instruction) what happened to the obstinate Jews; because it is certain that neither shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation. Christ commanded that this Gospel should be preached in all ages of the church (Mark, xvi. 16): "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned:" i. e. whosoever embraces the Gospel, and is initiated in it by being baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, and lives and dies in that faith, and practises those things that the Gospel requires, shall be saved; but he that rejects this faith, and the fruits of it, shall perish. This absolute condition of entering into eternal life should put us upon a serious examination of our hearts and actions, and ascertain whether or no our faith be sound and steadfast, and our consciences pure and void of offence. Many may, and too many do, make a fair and specious show in the world, who

at their heart have little of the love of Christ or of his Spirit in them. He is (to our great advantage) evidently set forth to us: it is preached to us that he was born our Saviour, that he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification; that he ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God to receive our prayers, and to make continual intercession for such as believe in his name; yet what will all this profit us if we continue to resist all godly notions, to slight the means and opportunities of salvation, and suffer sensuality to rule over our faculties, and sin to reign in our mortal bodies? Why needed we a Saviour but because we were sinners? and to what end were we redeemed but to be everlastingly thankful, and to serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives? Shall I then own his name in my profession and disown it in my practice; or call him, "Lord, Lord," and not do the things which he commands me? To what purpose is Christ my intercessor, if I never pray to the Father; or why is he my Mediator, if I never

apply to him for that end? In short, I am so far from reaping any benefit, by mentioning or professing the name of Christ, unless I also "depart from iniquity," that my condemnation shall be the greater; and knowledge abused will only increase the number of my stripes. The nativity of our Saviour was just matter of joy to the whole earth, and all mankind should have rejoiced in one common salvation; yet how soon did lamentation and weeping follow upon it, through the pride and cruelty of Herod! Christ first preached his Gospel in the holy city, Jerusalem, and delivered that doctrine which belonged to their temporal as well as eternal peace; yet this, which was in itself their privilege and glory, was by their malice and ignorance rejected to their ruin and confusion. The great mystery of godliness, which would have established peace within their walls, and plenteousness within their palaces, and restored the kingdom unto Israel, proved a rock of offence against which they dashed in pieces through unbelief, and became a desolation and a woe, as it is this day. Wherefore,

my brethren, let us acknowledge that there appeared inestimable love and mercy in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, and for which He cannot worthily enough be praised. Yet, let us consider that as the benefit is great when we lay up all these truths in our hearts, and bring forth the fruits of them in our conversations; so sin, which is committed now by Christians against the clearest light of knowledge and revelation, is of a deeper die, and of a more heinous nature. It is from hence that St. Paul reasons (Heb. xii. 25), that if they escaped not, who refused Moses that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Jesus, who speaketh from heaven.

II. Christ's coming in the flesh was a time of thorough trial, who would believe unto life, or not believe to their greater condemnation; thus was He in all respects like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap; for as it is the nature of fire to purify gold, silver, and other metals from their dross, and as fullers' soap washes off spots and filthiness from garments; so when our Lord came,

in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily, he unmasked hypocrisy, discovered the secrecies of sin, the world, and the devil, with all their real aggravations, revealed the wrath of God against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, purging and refining to himself a church, and making it meet and worthy of a glorious deliverance.

The Jew pleaded that he was the son of Abraham, and the disciple of Moses; but now it came to be tried who was the true Israel of God, and the children of the promise made to Abraham, which was, that in his seed (meaning Christ), all the nations of the earth should be blessed. God had at sundry times, and in divers manners, spoken unto their fathers by the Prophets, of whom they stoned some and killed others: at last he spake unto the world by his Son, as the last messenger and most perfect teacher of his will and counsel, and whosoever does not hearken unto him, there remains no other method of recovery, but "a fearful expectation and looking for of wrath and fiery indignation."

Therefore let us propose this case to ourselves, that we have the same tenders of grace, and means of salvation in the word and sacraments, together with the gracious invitations and precious promises of which the Gospel consists: this is our trial, this is the day of our visitation, and the last experiment which will be made of us: God even now warns all men every where to repent, and to believe in his Son, and that our conversation should be such as becometh his Gospel. We must expect no more revelations from heaven, nor any messengers from the dead, since God has already left nothing undone, which in his wisdom he thought necessary for the saving of our souls. Whatever we meet with in this life, it is generally for the exercise of our virtues and graces, and for the good of those that fear God: but especially, the mysteries and holy ordinances of our religion are vouchsafed us, to prepare and fit us for himself, and that all mouths may be stopped, and every one be found guilty at the last day, who neglects so great salvation.

We see errors permitted in the church, schisms and divisions disturbing the peace and unity of it; and heresies set on foot in the world, and boldly asserted and maintained, and the authors and abettors of them encouraged and rewarded for it. We have many temptations thrown in our way to withdraw us from holy performances, and to induce us to use religion as a tool only to serve our own indirect ends and purposes: and the greatness and frothy wisdom of this world usually look upon faith as folly, and upon holiness as the result of a mean and melancholy temper: and because their carnal minds cannot discern the things of the Spirit, no more than the blind can distinguish colours by the eye, they miserably conclude that divinity, devotion, and piety, are all foolishness in other people, because they seem so to themselves. Hence arise contempt of God's ordinances, neglect of his public worship, and an impudent humour to discountenance what God hath enjoined his church and people. Now there wanted not such, nay, they abounded in the earliest age of the

church, and yet the first professors of Christianity kept their integrity; their faithfulness and constancy were proved but not overthrown; their zeal was ridiculed but not abashed. If the truth of God was spoken against, they were grieved but not persuaded; if the fashion of the world took offence at the humility and condescension of Christ, yet they rather chose to follow the steps of an humble Saviour into his glory in Heaven, than to go into eternal misery with a proud and evil spirit.

Indeed, whatever wit or show can pretend in opposition to our faith, and the hope that is in us, it is easily upset by serious thought and consideration; for what proportion or equality can there be betwixt a moment and eternity, or how can the imperfection of the one be compared with the perfection of the other? We may well indeed call these trials and temptations so long as we are in the flesh, and conversant among them; but that we can overcome these is the rejoicing which we have in Christ Jesus our Lord; and

since trials and offences must needs come, let the authors of them remember who it is that says, "Woe be to them by whom they come!"

These considerations, therefore, should teach us these two things: firstly, that all CHRISTIANS should take warning from the effect of our Lord's first coming; from the rejection of the Jews from being the favoured and elect people of God; from the destruction of their church and nation; from their subsequent dispersion and misfortunes; from the overthrow of idolatry among the heathen, and the downfal of their mighty nations; so that at his second coming to judge the world finally, they may be found an acceptable people in his sight, and receive that promised kingdom which is prepared for those who love him. Secondly, that if called in the way of tribulation of any kind, either in adversity, persecution, sickness, or in prosperity, times of wickedness, or commotions, as trials of our faith, we may be found among those who shall faithfully believe unto life, to our endless glory and felicity in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

SERMON II.

HOSEA, x. 12.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

THIS admonition was given to the people of Israel, the children of the ten tribes, when labouring under the heavy burden of the Almighty's anger, and the denunciation of many grievous and impending judgments. The prophet tells us in the fourth chapter, that God had entered into a controversy with them, because there was no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of the Lord in the land. It appears that they had corrupted and forsaken the

worship of the true God, who was the God of Israel, and had given themselves up to idolatry and other abominations of the heathen, among whom they dwelt. For this cause the Lord became wroth with his inheritance, and sends the prophet Hosea to make known his displeasure, and how severely they would be visited with it. However, we see that the divine threatenings were oftentimes like the arrows of Jonathan, which were shot for warning rather than destruction; that, in general, they are conditional, and seldom or never exclude all hopes of mercy, with a view to immediate repentance. It is for this reason the prophets frequently intermix exhortation to repentance and obedience with their threatenings, of which the words in the text are an instance.

But this exhortation may be applied to any people, either to the Israelites formerly, or now to us Christians, to all who are desirous of the favour of God, or apprehensive of his displeasure, and indeed, it contains the only terms upon which any one may expect peace and reconciliation with God.

The words of the text are an allegory made up of several metaphorical terms borrowed from husbandry, which was the ancient employment of mankind.

1. In the first place, the prophet begins with sowing, " sow to yourselves in righteousness," although that is not the first part of husbandry, for there is much to be done before it, as you well know. I shall, nevertheless, take the words of the text in their order, and, as occasion may require, introduce the previous preparations of the land for receiving the seed. In a moral sense, sowing signifies action, whether internal of the mind, or external of the body: for as sowing is always succeeded by some crop, good or bad; so the thoughts, words, and actions of mankind, though they vanish for awhile, inasmuch as they pass from them, and lie covered as the seed does, yet they spring up again either to their shame and confusion, or to their comfort and glory. It therefore concerns us to look well to what we sow, to what we think, to what we do, and to what we say.

The prudent husbandman will not carelessly and indifferently sow any thing that comes to hand, but will be sure to choose the best seed, and seize the proper season. In like manner we should be careful not to live at random, not to speak or do whatever is suggested, or comes into the head, but we should accurately regard the time and season when we act or speak. "A word fitly spoken," says Solomon, "is like apples of gold in pictures of silver;" and St. Paul exhorts us, that whatever we do, all should be done to the praise and glory of God.

It is for the above purpose the prophet bids us to sow in righteousness, for we cannot carry on the glory of God, or sincerely intend it in any other way; and by that expression he at once denotes the quality of the seed or the grain which is to be sown, namely, righteousness.

By righteousness is meant, not the virtues of justice and honesty only in our intercourse and dealings with one another, but it includes also all acts of piety and devotion towards God.

St. Paul's injunction to the Philippians (c. iv. 8) is a good paraphrase on sowing in righteousness. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue or any praise *(to be obtained)*, think on these things;" and whoever turns the Word into works expresses in his actions the commands of God, and soweth in righteousness. Not less to the quantity must we take heed than to the quality: frugality in this matter is neglect; and his heart cannot be right who serves God only by halves, or subserviently to his worldly feelings; but he is truly righteous who abounds in the work of the Lord.

And here let me remark a peculiar feature in this admonition: "sow to yourselves," said the prophet, by which he signified that it was for our own interest and advantage. Mankind may be frustrated in all their other labours, but in this work they can never be disappointed. As to the things of this world, one may sow and another may

reap, and what one builds and plants another may take possession of. Most men labour for others, in point of fact, in whatever they do; but he only and truly lives to himself who makes it his business to be found upright before God; that man's labour is not in vain, the profit accrues solely to himself, and it is therefore added, "reap in mercy."

If mankind were to examine themselves and actions impartially, and seriously consider how mean and imperfect, in reality, the best of them are, they would discern clearly their merits to be very small, and that little belonged to them on their account.

It is, then, justly said, "reap in mercy," that we may not think that which is the bounty of our God to be our due. Although I may safely inculcate this opinion, that all those who are sincere and industrious in sowing righteousness may look for mercy, as the husbandman for the crop; they may, indeed, assure themselves of it, which he cannot do, and they may claim it as their privilege by virtue of the divine promise, which can never fail.

The word reap, here used in the imperative mood, is very expressive, as it shows the certainty of the effect of sowing in righteousness. (See also Ezekiel, xviii. 32).

As sowing therefore must precede reaping, so righteousness must be sown to reap mercy, and we to become fit objects of it; and as naturally the crop exceeds the measure of the grain which was sown, so the gifts and expressions of God's mercy towards righteous persons will infinitely surpass the works done by them. Is it inquired how God will show his mercy to such persons? I answer, it is written in Scripture, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Cor. ii. 9.

But like the husbandman, who long before the harvest is refreshed and cheered with the sight and fragrance of the field; so the soul of the righteous is comforted and strengthened by the Almighty, even in this world; and in the world to come is promised glory unspeak-

able and never fading, and the blessing of eternal life.

The light of God's countenance even in this life, where its beams are often intercepted by our carnal desires and mental weakness, affords more joy than the time of harvest, when corn and wine abound; notwithstanding such obstructions it must necessarily therefore do so in an exceeding degree in the other world, where it shines fully and clearly, and without interruption, and there is nothing to intercept its influence and power.

How abundant, how great should be the joy at the very prospect of this harvest; how happy they who with a modest confidence can trust for a participation in it; what an invaluable privilege to sow where we may reap so plenteously; with what looks can any disregard the exhortation of the prophet, or what excuse be made for such insensibility! Have mankind, by their many and various inventions, found out any higher felicity than what God in infinite mercy can confer; or have they discovered a nearer and a better way to it than

the prophet, to warn us to sow in righteousness? Is it better to toil and labour for worldly gain than godliness, for temporal than eternal riches? or do we stand in greater need of the meat which perisheth, than of that which endureth unto life everlasting? "Will ye plough wickedness, and reap iniquity, and eat the bread of lies?" Will ye die rather than live? Surely this were an unreasonable and shameful choice; yet one of them must be made. There is no alternative, or middle course, to pursue. It is certain that the wages of sin is death; and it is equally certain that there is no way to attain everlasting life but by our bearing fruit unto holiness.

Then, be not deceived, my brethren: "*God is not mocked:* for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting *."

The prophet having told us what we shall reap.

* Gal. vi. 7, 8.

proceeds in directing us to use those means which are requisite in order to it, and to the performance of those duties to which reaping in mercy is promised. Of this mankind need to be well reminded, for ordinarily they are remiss and negligent about it. There are many who would be reaping; but not many set themselves to the work and labour that must certainly be done beforehand. They would thrust in the sickle for themselves, though they have not sown, nor made any preparations for it: but, whoso soweth not shall not reap.

"Break up your fallow ground, for it is time." If the land be not prepared, your sowing is to no purpose; for the seed was lost that fell upon stony hard ground, among thorns, and in the highway. But hear the parable.

The seed to be sown is the word of God; our hearts are the ground which must receive it: and these cannot receive it until they are made good and honest by care and practice. To this effect were our Saviour's words: "But that *(seed)* on the good ground are they, which in

an honest and good heart, having heard the word keep it," *i. e. do it,* "and bring forth fruit with patience."

Land must be tilled, even furrows made, and the weeds gathered up and burned, or it is in vain that seed is sown, or a crop expected. Just so with our hearts: their natural state is like fallow ground, unfit and indisposed to receive good seed from the hand of the sower, and of itself brings forth only thorns and briers, which are evil thoughts and actions.

The natural produce of the heart of man now is wickedness: "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Naturally we are dull and averse to true goodness: for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned *." But hard and bad as is the natural heart, through

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

God's grace it may be changed, and improved, if due pains are taken with it.

Yet no natural depravity of heart can ever excuse us from being and doing good; though, in ignorance, folly, and wantonness some have so pretended. How weak and pitiful should we think that man who, as a husbandman, turns his back upon labour, because his ground does not of itself yield aught but weeds and thistles! Truly, he is the one who ought to labour more abundantly, and, by art and industry, make it do that which, of itself, it will not do.

Such is our own case. Our hearts are the fallow ground; and therefore let us break up and weed them. By unwearied care and diligence let us wear down their natural growth, and render them susceptible of better feelings; let us pluck up the prejudices of our nature, throw away the choking cares of life, and break off the course of sin.

Supply your hearts continually with prayer and meditation on God's word; use properly your reason, and seriously consider your ways; attend to

those means and ordinances God hath appointed; and, in process of time, under the watchful eye of God, our hearts will be broken up and changed, from their natural barrenness into a life of holiness and good works. To sow among thorns would be foolish and ridiculous, because we could not naturally expect any increase, nor even the return of the seed again. Mortify, therefore, your lusts, subdue your passions, and daily cultivate your hearts with acts of repentance and contrition; and, under the exercise of prayer, meditation, and patience, the good seed will prosper in you, and, springing up, "bring forth much fruit."

Thus we learn what the Christian's task is; and he is incited by the prophet to go about it with speed and diligence, and is encouraged with the assurance of final success: "for it is time to seek the Lord, until he come, and rain righteousness upon you."

Now, observe, that by seeking the Lord is intended seeking his favour and protection, which is the solid ground of our comfort and happiness; or his help and assistance, which renders our labour

effectual: and when we heartily practise the duties enjoined in his Gospel, we seek both.

"*For it is time.*" There is a proper season and opportunity for it. The season for breaking up and sowing is *life*, and the time is now, while God allows you the use of reason, and the means of grace; while he makes offers of salvation, and calls you, by his providence, in the diffusion of the Gospel. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." It is full time, and not to be let slip without regard. Delay is therefore dangerous; for our time, ere to-morrow's sun rises upon the fields, may be at an end. There is time yet, indeed, but not to sleep nor loiter. No, my brethren, it is rather high time to awake out of sleep, to gird up our loins, to be sober and watch unto prayer, and to apply ourselves to our spiritual work, lest the night come upon us in which no man can work.

It is the ignorant folly of many that they heedlessly think they have times and seasons in their own power; at least, they act as if they thought

so: but we neither have always time and opportunity, nor can we at all times command grace to use it aright, and therefore should embrace it while it may be had.

Oftentimes some among mankind come to that state in which they can neither seek nor work; have neither strength of body nor mind; cannot desire that which is good even: sometimes they seek, but find no acceptance; desire and endeavour, but have no success. Thus Isaiah forewarns us: "When you spread forth your hands I will hide my face from you; when you make many prayers I will not hear." And in the book of Proverbs we find it written: "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." In Jeremiah: "Though they shall cry unto me, yet will I not hearken."

Wherefore, following the advice of the Apostle, exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, to take heed lest any of you be hardened through

the deceitfulness of sin. You that are now old must readily acknowledge that it is the time for you, if ever, to seek the Lord, and mind the business of your salvation; for your time is far spent, your sun is setting, and your day is almost at an end.

You that are young have no less reason to fall quickly to work: for though by the course of nature you may live a considerable time, yet you know that course may be, and often has been, interrupted suddenly, of which the new turfed grave of the infant or the youth continually warns you. Therefore, neither young nor old should give sleep to their eyes, or slumber to their eyelids, till they have sought the Lord, and he comes and rains righteousness upon them.

In temporal matters, mankind often seek and labour, but do not obtain: but, saith the Lord, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain*." Those who diligently and faithfully seek the Lord will certainly be rewarded by him; and

* Isaiah, xlv. 19.

although sometimes he hide himself for awhile, yet he will not do it for ever: we should not faint, but wait patiently till we find Him whom our soul loveth. We are to seek till he come, which requires unwearied constancy in seeking: for there is need of patience to them that have done the will of God, that they may receive the promise *. It would be childish to fret, because we are not presently answered; to desist from our work, because we cannot immediately reap the fruits of it; and God best knows his hour, and tarries till it comes, and so should we: we are put off, probably to try our faith and constancy, for the example of others; to exercise our patience, and to quicken our desires.

Be patient, then, my brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh †." And

* Heb. x. 36. † James, v. 7, 8.

when He comes, he will rain righteousness upon you. Without rain, the labour of the husbandman is useless; but if the rain falls, his labours prosper, he "eats and is satisfied."

In like manner, the dew of heaven is necessary to our spiritual husbandry: it also depends entirely on the blessing of God, without which all our labour is in vain; for, saith our Lord, "Without me ye can do nothing *." But, as God giveth rain and snow to water the earth, to make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so, in spiritual blessings, he will not be wanting to those who are not deficient to themselves. Let us be steadfast, therefore, in our profession, and in the duties of Christianity, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord; and we shall find, sooner or later, that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord; to whom, &c. Amen.

* John, xv. 5.

SERMON III.

HEBREWS, iv. 2.

But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

WHOEVER impartially considers the Christian religion, cannot but acknowledge the laws and precepts of it to be so reasonable and excellent, and the practice of them so evidently framed not only to promote the happiness of individuals, but the peace and welfare of the world; and, moreover, the promises and threatenings of the Gospel, which are the urgent motives to persuade men to obey them, to be so agreeable to the natural fears and

hopes which mankind have been always possessed with, that, upon these considerations, it might be justly expected, that wherever the Gospel is preached, it would work a thorough reformation in those who hear it, and prevail upon them to become not only good, but the very best of men.

However consonant with reason this supposition is, we find the preaching of the Gospel to be followed by the contrary effect: since it is very obvious that multitudes of persons who are enjoying the Gospel in its greatest purity and perfection are as corrupted in their principles, and sensual in their practices, and in all respects as vicious, as those who never heard the Gospel, or those who have it not so clearly and fully discovered to them as themselves.

To a reflecting mind this inconsistency may seem strange, when the frequency and the power with which the Gospel is preached among us, both in city and in country, is considered: but several causes may be assigned for it, and, among them, that which is mentioned in the text; namely, that

the word preached does not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who hear it.

In the previous chapter, the apostle having proved that there was a rest promised to the people of God, and that infidelity and disobedience to the commands of the Almighty were the occasion of their being excluded from it, he therefore exhorts all Christians to take care lest they should fail in attaining it, on the same account. "Let *us* therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." He then adds the reason for giving such advice: "unto *us* was the Gospel preached as well as unto them:" i. e. we have now the same Gospel preached to us as they had to them: "but the word preached," or, as in the original, the word heard, "did not profit them;" they received no benefit from it, nor were admitted into the rest promised in it, "not being mixed with faith in them that heard it," that is, being distrustful of the promises made by God to them, they became careless and indifferent in their conduct towards Him,

and by that means lost the reward held out to them.

This is the true and proper meaning of the words in the text; and I shall from thence take the opportunity to observe, that the influence and effect of the word preached to us depend upon our believing it. What we hear can leave no impression unless we believe it: but if we believe what we hear preached from the Gospel, we shall derive extraordinary benefit from it, and it will contribute effectually towards bringing us out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

This important truth ought to point to us where the fault exists, that so many persons are no better for hearing the word of God, which is continually preached to them; and also how they may always be improved by it. Let us then inquire what we are to understand by the word preached, and then what by believing it.

By the word preached is intended, the entire system of divine revelations, as they are contained

in the books of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENTS: for the Scriptures being given by the inspiration of God, the whole of them, one part as well as another, are equally the word of God. Then we have the witness of God himself, that whatever is commanded or forbidden in them, it is His will that we should or should not do it; that whatever is there threatened against impenitent sinners, or promised to the penitent, God will have it fulfilled; that whatever is recorded in them as having been said or done was so, accordingly as related; that whatever is there foretold shall accordingly come to pass; and that whatever is therein affirmed is infallibly true, as being the word of Truth itself, which cannot lie.

By our believing the word is intended, our being fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of every thing contained in it, in a manner proportionable to the ground we have for doing so; and that being the authority of God, is the firmest we can have for our reliance on it. I shall now, then, explain to you, that the word preached cannot profit us

unless we believe it: but that, if we believe it rightly, we shall receive great benefit from it.

We find, by constant and daily experience, that a firm belief or full persuasion of any thing, even in this world, has so much power over our minds as to carry all our affections after it. If we *really believe* a thing to be good for us, we cannot but love and desire it, and, labouring after it, be glad when we have obtained it. If we really believe a thing to be evil, or hurtful to us, we cannot but dread and endeavour to shun it, and be troubled when it falls upon us.

It is thus we act, though our belief or persuasion is grounded only on our own fancies, or corrupt reasons, or on the testimony of our fellow creatures. Shall a human faith, then, my brethren, have such power in *natural*, and a divine faith not have as much and more influence over us in *spiritual*, affairs? To think or affirm otherwise would be unreasonable and impious; for, "if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." [1 John v. 9]. Therefore, those things which the

Almighty has attested, if we duly believe them upon his witness or testimony, must necessarily prevail more powerfully over us, than any other influence whatever.

To place this subject in a clearer light, and make it more plain and easy to be understood, I will briefly run through the several parts of God's word, and show what influence and effect each of them may be justly supposed to have upon us, when it is mixed or received with faith.

All that is written in the holy scriptures, which comprehend the whole word of God, may be reduced to these four heads, namely, commandments, threatenings, promises, and affirmations.

The commandments are those moral laws and precepts recorded in the scriptures, as enacted by God, or which is the same, by his Holy Spirit in the prophets and apostles. Now when we read or hear of any of these commandments, if at the same time we firmly believe, and are persuaded in our minds that they are prescribed to us by the Almighty, our consciences must be touched, and our

hearts affected, with a lively sense of the obligations that lie upon us to observe them. Besides, a holy fear lest we should ever break them must come over us, and a resolution arise to keep them as punctually as human nature will allow.

Such was the effect of the word of God upon the children of Israel at the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai; for they said to Moses, "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou to us, and we will hear it, and *do it*." Whoever feels otherwise disposed, or is indifferent to the solemn preaching and declaration of God's word and will, may assure himself, whatever he may at the moment think or say, that he is not certainly persuaded they are the laws of the supreme judge and governor of the world. For, if he was, we should see his faith by his works, and the laws of God working a fervent desire in his mind, and a sincere endeavour on his part to observe and keep them.

Let all such persons remember the penalty which God has threatened against those who trans-

gress his laws, not less than death itself. When God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he told him at the same time, that in the day that he eat thereof, he should surely die. Gen. ii. 17. If Adam had truly believed this, it is more than probable he never would have eaten of that tree; and we see the serpent, therefore, had no other way to prevail upon him, but by persuading him that he should not die. Gen. iii. 4. So it is, alas! to this day. When God in his all-wise providence was pleased to punish the first transgression with death, he sufficiently declared by that means, that all sin should be visited with death in every sense of the word, comprehending, as it does, all the miseries to which our nature is liable.

If mankind did really believe this truth, how effectually would it work in them and upon their lives! We dread the law of man which inflicts the inevitable sentence of death upon certain crimes, and we refrain from them because we really believe execution will certainly follow their commission;

we escape from the impending storm because we really believe it will wet us through, and in all we do, belief attends our actions.

Do we then, when transgressing the commandments of God, believe that he will not punish, but have mercy and forgive, and reward; or do we believe that he will visit us either here, or in the next world, for our iniquities?

If we do not believe the last to be the case, we cannot rationally entertain the belief of the other; and, since action is the sign of belief, we may fairly suppose that the wicked neither believe the commandments of God to be binding, or that the infraction of them will certainly be attended with the consequences threatened by the Almighty.

The same may be justly said of the promises which God has made to those who keep his laws, which are so many and so great, that if mankind did really believe in them, they would need no other arguments to persuade them to do whatever he has commanded.

A true faith is an active principle, and will excite us to constant endeavours to do that only which

God requires: it will inspire us with courage and resolution in doing it, and keep us steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. By this faith we are assured that all the pains we take to please the Almighty God will one day turn to good account for ourselves: we have the word of God for it, the best security that can be given.

Nor is the like power and energy wanting to those other parts and portions of scripture which fall under the last of the general heads I mentioned, and which I designated affirmations. By these I mean, whatever is affirmed in the holy scriptures concerning God, the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost, or any other truth that is there revealed on purpose that we might believe it.

For that which is so affirmed, if received with the full assurance of faith, and accordingly believed, will so completely affect us as to cleanse our hearts from all erroneous and corrupt opinions, and fill them with a due sense and right notion of divine

things; to this effect, St. Peter saith concerning the Gentiles, "that God purified their hearts by faith." Acts, xv. 9.

It is thus we learn how effectually the word of God works and prevails upon mankind, when mixed with faith in them that hear it; but, on the other hand, on those who do not believe, it falls like a spark into the water, on which it no sooner lights, than it is extinguished. Hence, we discover likewise why so many hear the word of God and are never the wiser or better for it: the fault is not in the word preached, nor in a preacher, but in those who hear it, and in them so far only as not believing earnestly what they hear. As without faith it is impossible to please God, so without faith it is impossible the word of God should profit us.

Wherefore, let those who truly believe what God has revealed to us in his holy word think and meditate oftentimes upon it, that it may become profitable to us for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that we may grow thereby in grace and in the

knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And while others live only by sense or fancy, or at best by corrupt and carnal affections, actuated by these in all they do, we may for the future live by the faith in the Son of God, and constantly believe those truths he has unfolded to us as the great principle of our actions.

How virtuous and how useful would be the lives we should then lead! how creditable to the christian profession! Then we should truly repent of all our sins, because it is written in God's word, that "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke, xiii. 3. Then we should be more circumspect and cautious in all our actions, because we are told in the same word, that "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." Eccles. xii. 14. We should refrain, not only from profane, but idle talk, because the same word assures us that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matt. xii. 36. We should then be humble

and lowly in our own eyes, because St. Peter warns us it is written, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." 1 Peter, v. 5. Our endeavours would be directed towards walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, because our Saviour expressly says, "he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, *he it is* that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." John, xiv. 21. The world would have no more real pleasures for us, because we are informed, "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John, ii. 15. The chastisements or afflictions which God may be pleased to lay upon us would not deject us, for we should remember that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Heb. xii. 6. Nor should we despair of God's mercy in the pardon of inadvertent sins, for "we know that, if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our

sins." 1 John, ii. 1, 2. We should then with patience, but with zeal, press towards the mark for the prize and high calling of God in Christ Jesus, because it is written for our encouragement, "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." Rev. iii. 21.

Were we then always to live with a firm belief on our minds of that which is written in God's holy word, we should live in the other world while we are in this; our conversation would be in heaven; our thoughts and affections would be fixed on heavenly things; on Almighty God as present with us; or on our Saviour as interceding for us, or on the work that he hath set us to do, or on the account that we must one day give him of it, or on the reward that he has promised to those who do it faithfully, or on other things contained in the written word. In this manner should we steer our even course through all the changes and chances of this mortal life, till we arrive at

the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.

Let us now awake to righteousness, and take heed how we hear, and how we believe, and we may soon excel in piety before men, and in devotion towards God. The spirits of darkness, already consigned to misery, believe and tremble; but let your belief so shine before men, that they may behold your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven; and in heaven your Almighty Father will glorify you. Amen.

SERMON IV.

JOHN, xv. 4.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

IN the Gospel there are several examples of the extent of human weakness, which show the necessity of imploring God for the continual influence of his Holy Spirit upon us.

Among these are the cases of Judas Iscariot, and that of Peter and the disciples. Judas betrayed his Lord for a bribe; Peter denied him; and the rest of the disciples were ashamed of him, and fled away at the hour of his trial. There are other instances of the like kind; and among these, the temptation of our Lord in the wilderness.

I shall proceed, therefore, to explain in a comprehensive manner the doctrine of grace, firstly, illustrating the figure under which it was described by our Lord; secondly, the nature of the effects produced by grace; and, lastly, the method to obtain it.

It is a doctrine much abused: the careless and inattentive ridicule, and the ignorant pervert it; but amidst all the obstructions it has encountered and still meets with, success attends its dissemination, "so mightily grows the word of God and prevails."

I. In this chapter our Lord described this doctrine under the figure of the vine and its branches; for by grace is generally, if not always, signified, the influence of the Holy Spirit upon us, and the spiritual nourishment we derive from that holy support, except in such instances as when Noah found grace in the sight of God.

"*I am the true vine, and my Father* is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that

beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Thus spake Jesus.

There is not a stronger similitude, under which we are taught that practical and not theoretical religion is the one thing needful, or the providence of God, or the influence of his Holy Spirit on earth, is more aptly described.

In the first part of it, the useless or unprofitable members of Christ's church, upon whom the Spirit of God has been shed in vain at baptism, are figured; in the second part of it, those members who have brought forth the fruits of the Spirit: but even as the husbandman purgeth the bearing branch by prunings, that it may bring forth more fruit, so does God sometimes by afflictions cleanse those who are doing well, that they may still do better.

" If ye abide not in me, as the branch is taken away and dieth, so shall ye :" if ye keep not my commandments, ye will become cankered and corrupted by the world, and bear no fruit unto righteousness and true holiness; your end shall be, to be taken away, and cast forth into utter darkness. We know by one and the same rule whether we abide in Christ, and Christ in us. If our conduct is such as disgraces the moral creature, we cannot believe the spirit of Christ to be in us; if we behave contrary to that which becometh the saints of God, it would be blasphemy to suppose that the spirit of Christ abideth in us: it would be also more fearfully impious, if, when committing acts denounced by the Gospel, we nevertheless pretend that we abide in Christ.

" *Herein is my Father glorified*," said Jesus, " *that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples.*" If we can become a disciple of Christ only by bearing much fruit, it is idling our time away to forget that, when new-born in Christ, we must *act* as becometh the Scripture new-born

creature. By *much* fruit our Lord intended more than prayer to the Deity, something beyond a stated periodical adoration of Him, something besides assuming the name of a Christian. Accordingly the influence of the Spirit may be seen in the lives of mankind, and will be clearly manifest if the grace of God be upon us. But this doctrine is disputed by some, though vainly, which we shall find to be the case, when we consider the instances of the influence of the Holy Spirit related in the Gospel.

II. We are instructed concerning the effect or fruits of the Holy Ghost in a very early period of history, when, according to St. Peter, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and delivered the prophecies of old. Omitting, for the sake of brevity, any further particular illustration of the office of the Holy Ghost from the Old Testament, we may next see it displayed in the call of the immediate disciples of our Lord, who became the apostles. It again appeared upon the day of Pentecost, enabling the apostles to

speak in many different languages; afterwards in the conversion of Saul, and numbers of Jews and heathens.

But this divine influence is to be observed beyond those early days, in the change of feelings and manners which pervaded those who became Christians in after-ages. It led them to form a society of that nature, which never existed, nor was thought of before, and was rendered notorious only by the purity of the lives of its members, and the patience with which they bore the severest persecutions.

Such was the effect of the Holy Ghost in those first days of the Gospel, when "the grace of God which brought salvation appeared to all men, teaching them that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope [of immortality and happiness] and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from iniquity,

and purify unto himself a people zealous of good works."

Furthermore, the grace of God is still to be seen directing the church of Christ. For if Barnabas, in the conversion of the Jews and heathens, *saw the grace of God*, we may likewise observe it in the extraordinary diffusion of Christianity at present going on throughout the known world, proving, as it does, that what our Lord promised that he fulfils, being " always with his church unto the end."

Let us then next reflect on the character of a disciple of Christ, and the effect of God's grace upon him ; in plain words, the character of a Christian. For, as grace is the true vine, so Christians are its branches ; as, therefore, the vine is required to bring forth much fruit upon its branches, so grace amongst Christians should produce actions corresponding to it ; else, like barren branches cut off and cast away, Christians, in the last day, will be cut off from the presence of God, and punished with other sinners.

The grace of God should therefore regulate the Christian's intercourse with his fellow-Christians, and his treatment of the world. It is difficult, I know, to pursue the duties of a Christian faithfully, free from censure from one party or another. On one side he is set down for a pharisaical puritan; on the other—like one, alas! who was too perfect for the world, our Lord—for a friend of the gluttonous and winebibbers, the companion of sinners. The medium which Christians have rendered it necessary for the true disciple to pursue, is a line alike arduous and uncertain to tread along without tottering and deviating to either side; that is, without acting contrary to the opinion of one party or the other. Before the holy family of Christ became so exceedingly numerous as it has done, one even tenor of conduct marked their lives as to discipline and morality, however frequent and manifold their dissensions on doctrinal subjects were. Living amongst themselves entirely, and opposed to the world around them, their mutual comfort, order, and happiness, depended upon the

strictness of their conduct, and their implicit obedience to the Christian decrees*. The only enemies they had to guard against were unbelievers. The scene is now changed; and I fear the true vine, with its long and wide-spreading branches, seems to foretell that the Husbandman, when he cometh to prune, will have much work to do, in clearing it from its corruptions, and the destructive weeds which have twined themselves around them.

By the way-side or in the garden fruits of this true vine should be seen; in the market-place as well as in the parlour, in the world as in society. But it is to be lamented that Christianity is taken captive frequently by the world, and that the devotees of the latter have more influence in society than the strict professors of the other. Yet such was the prophecy of Christ: "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye might believe. Hereafter I will

* See the Acts of the Apostles.

not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

When considering, therefore, this parable of the vine and the branches, it becomes evident that our Lord signified the power of the Holy Spirit, which after the ascension should be offered to all men who would diligently seek it. His dwelling in us, and we in Him, intends not only that without Him we could do nothing acceptable to His will, but the direct influence the Holy Spirit would have. To this effect St. Paul says, "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus *."

Our Lord, in the above instance, could not have alluded to *faith* in Him, since it is "by *faith* that we have access *into* this *grace*," and, "by *grace* ye are saved, through *faith*."

* St. Peter also says, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but that he should live to the will of God."

Grace, then, is the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of mankind.

Thus we read of Jesus, " that the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him." So, when a number of Grecians were converted to Christianity, we hear that the apostle Barnabas, when he came to Antioch, and " *had seen the grace of God*, was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

When the apostles departed from the disciples they recommended them always to the grace of God, and St. Paul often blesses them with those words, " the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always."

III. How is this grace to be obtained? By earnest and regular prayer to God *. In this duty, and for this purpose, our Redeemer continually set us the example, in going from his disciples, and praying alone to God; in exhorting

* " Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find."

them regularly to call upon God; in praying before them, and being so punctilious as even to teach them in a set form of words how to pray. They who occupy an hour now and then in attentively reading the Gospel must perceive the energy and frequency with which Christians are directed in the constant use of prayer. "Pray without ceasing"—"Be instant in prayer." These expressions are intended to urge us strictly to perform this serious duty. Our blessed Saviour spoke a parable to the disciples "to this end, that mankind ought always to pray, and not to faint." He illustrated the duty by the case of the widow and the judge, the latter of whom feared not God nor regarded man. By unceasing importunity, when her case seemed desperate, and she oftentimes ready to resign herself to despair and hopelessness, it appears justice was given to her. "Because this widow troubleth me," said the judge, "I will avenge her cause, lest by her continual coming she weary me." "Hear what the unjust judge saith," said the Lord.

And shall God not do justice to the followers of His beloved Son, our Lord? Surely, though he tarry long apparently to us, he will speedily avenge our cause, if we continue dutiful to Him; for if an unjust man can be prevailed upon by entreaty to be merciful, much more confidently may we hope that the holy God of all goodness, long-suffering, and mercy, will regard our supplications.

On another occasion, the disciples were to ask and it should be given unto them, but to ask in Christ's name, and for his merits. The blessings of God, the spirit of the Holy Ghost, descended upon the centurion's house and family, because they closed their nights and welcomed in the mornings with adoration to the Deity for his providence here below. Simeon and Anna on this account were blessed with the sight and knowledge of the Lord in infancy; and, lastly, Jesus Christ forewarned us to *pray that we enter not into temptation*, and, in the words of the text, to remember that without his Spirit we can

do nothing *. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

Indeed, the gross sensuality and depravity which have existed among idolaters, and are prevalent among more enlightened people, even in Christian countries, too plainly show what religion is when unassisted by the influence of the Spirit of God, that, in fact, the form alone of religion remains.

However, the influence of the Holy Spirit is a subject of very deep importance, and deserving more serious contemplation than it meets with. In the nurture of infants the greatest care is requisite to preserve their lives. In the bringing up of children the same care is required to make them creditable to Christian parents. In the raising of a flower, or in the culture of the field, care is necessary; and so, in every thing that we do, we find care is indispensable. If, then, care is

* See also 1 John, v. 12.

so essential in any earthly object we are pursuing, it surely is not less so in the cultivation of the Holy Spirit. Like the wind, that bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of God.

This mysterious influence of the Holy Spirit thus described in the Gospel instructs us how careful Christians should be as to what manner of persons they are; and that they let it not pass away unheeded. Though the grace of God has been received, it is possible to have received it in vain; and it would have been better for us never to have been born where the sound of the Gospel is heard, and the truth is known, than, having received them, to turn away from them. The fruits of the Spirit are called in Scripture gentleness, patience, joy, meekness, temperance, long-suffering, and forbearance; and when we contemplate the selfish and unruly wills of our nature, our natural inclination to indulge in evil passions, and the blandishments in which vice is

clothed to allure us, we, like the heathen philosopher of old, must acknowledge and deplore that we are sadly in need of some supernatural and divine aid to instruct and lead us in the right way.

Has not civil society some influence on the minds and conduct of individuals? Has not affection some silent influence upon parted friends? Has not the tie of kindred some influence upon distant relations? These each have their influence for awhile. But if from moral, we stray into licentious society—if friends are a length of time apart, and new connexions are formed, and these can change the former influence —if kindred are deceased, or so far away that their interest cannot influence us, it is more likely that the less communion we have in prayer with God, the less influence will his Spirit have upon us. Let us, therefore, not only hold fast our faith, but pursue the duties of our Christian profession without wavering. Let us be diligent and unceasing in lighting up our morning sacrifice of prayer

with the beams of the orient sun, and with prayer extinguish it when the declining rays of that luminary are veiled in darkness. Let us watch against evil temptations, as well as pray not to be led away by them. Then shall we be blessed by the Almighty, and by his Holy Spirit be conducted through things temporal to the fruition of that hope which animates the good Christian here, and will be everlasting happiness to him hereafter. For as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can we, unless we continue in the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

SERMON V.

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

THESE words form a prayer to the Almighty for the assistance of his Holy Spirit in our endeavours to attain unto wisdom.

The occasion which produced this Psalm was the judgment inflicted by the Almighty upon the Jews for disobedience to His laws; a punishment which consisted in limiting the period of their existence to eighty years, instead of prolonging it to a hundred and twenty or thirty years.

The purport of the prayer, therefore, as regards the Jews, is this, namely, that by this affliction

they might learn to make the best use of their time in future, lest any thing worse should be visited upon them.

Such a prayer would become the lips of a Christian, as it did those of the penitent Jew. But its language seems to intimate to us, that mankind are generally so devoted to the business or pleasures of the world, that they take no leisure to engage in those meditations in which all who profess the belief of a superintending Providence ought at times to employ themselves.

I shall endeavour, therefore, by a proper exposition of these words, to lead you, my brethren, into the habit of so reflecting.

And firstly, The days to be numbered must be those gone by, and not those to come, which we may never reach. So that, should it please Providence to prolong our lives, we may receive benefit from the past, and duly prepare ourselves for that period when, in our turn, others will have to number us among the dead.

In numbering our days, the account must be

made out to the present hour; casting up those which are long since passed, in which we gave credit to the future, with the vain hope and expectation of then reaping some advantage. But "day unto day uttereth her voice;" and it is by the observation of the passing hours, and those for ever fled, that we may learn to apply our hearts unto wisdom, and be enabled to obtain it.

The indolent, the extravagant, the dissipated, the ambitious, the imprudent, the gay, the thoughtless, the passionate, are each in their turns the subject of the tale of the day.

As to the indolent, we may remember the time when he might have done well, at least as well as others; now, we hear that he is obliged to stroll about his country, a vagabond on the earth, and get his livelihood in some dishonest way, since, rejected by all reputable people, he is reduced, by his folly and laziness, to resort to bad practices to obtain even his daily bread. What is the last of such a character? To be immured within the prison cell, or to die upon the scaffold. A moment or

two may be spared to consider how he came to this latter end; the manner in which he formerly passed his days; and then the necessity of fathers and mothers bringing up their children in industrious habits, and setting them an example of these themselves, will be discerned at once.

Of the extravagant we may have more cause to remember, whether we were the relation or friend, the tradesman or the labourer. His mansion, once the pride and ornament of our village, is no longer standing; his lands are divided and sold; there are no menials in his hall; no merriment is to be heard within it; no festive scene attracts the neighbourhood within his gates; and whither have his family fled? Forlorn, poor, dejected, they are scattered abroad, avoided by the former companions of their sunshine hours; and he is fallen among the crowd, and either lies degraded in a jail, or is lingering out his life, concealed and unknown, in some obscure and distant hamlet.

Are any bettered by such a lamentable event? Is the relation made happy, or does the friend

acquire honour from such an acquaintance, and such an issue of his life? Is the tradesman enriched by heavy book debts? Do the labouring poor any longer receive his support? No. Neither to himself, his family, or his neighbour, has he done any real good; but incalculable mischief among those to whom he should have afforded a very different example.

Let these thoughts, and there are others in which you may indulge, point out to you, my brethren, the vanity of earthly joys, and the folly of desires to be more than what we are. Let these inform you how weak the mind grows, which disdains to make religion the mainspring of its actions; and that from the hand of God blessings can become a curse to the wicked and the idle. Let it tell home to your bosoms the disgraceful and shocking end to which extravagance will lead us, and as you lament for the misery it has occasioned to others, guard against such a vice gaining upon yourselves.

But in numbering our days, many characters

must pass in review before us, and there is one too common in provincial towns, and sometimes found in the village—that of a man who, by industry in his business having earned a competency, retired from public life. His situation enables him to meet others in a degree of life to which he had been unaccustomed. His pride is raised; he joins their convivial parties, which, much to the disgrace of many places, it is the custom to hold at some tavern, where their families are not present, and by such a practice becomes a drunkard. This character, of which there are many instances, often dies in the workhouse.

Besides, it is not what individuals suffer for their indiscretions that concerns us; it is what the mother, the son, the daughter, and others, have to endure, and always live to deplore bitterly.

This system of reflection I call numbering our days; because, since we know not the hour, or the day, or the year when our life shall terminate, we can number those days only that are passed, and what has occurred in them. But daily we

may number them, and, as they close upon us, consider how soon our life may end, and we be summoned to the next world.

Our thoughts hitherto have been turned towards the life of men: but women are likewise to be the subject of them: much more depending upon these as to what men become, than the sex generally feel or believe *. Children are their peculiar care, and the mother has the opportunity to make home a scene of joy and contentment, and a family the pattern of religion and good conduct, or convert the dwelling into an abode of strife, vexation, and misery, and the household into a family of sinful and unhappy wretches, examples of impiety and disorder.

Among the female sex there are some who are terrible warnings to others; and when we see the deplorable state to which they are reduced, it is our duty to number their days, consider how they

* I mean to say, that it is in your power, by discretion, industry, and patience, either to wean a husband from a bad course of life, or keep him stedfast, if he hath begun well.

have been consumed, and trace the origin of their present condition.

When numbering their days, the unlettered poor will find that very numerous are the scenes and characters in life, from which they may derive instruction for their future conduct. For if they will set aside only one evening in the week, to turn their thoughts on all those whom they have known, and on many others of whom they have heard, or upon whom even common conversation often falls, then may they remark the uncertainty of life, and what is usually the end of the good man, what the last of the sinner, whether he were an idler, a prodigal, a gamester, a drunkard, a robber, or a libertine.

This system of reflection is the method of numbering our days which the Psalmist desired mankind to pursue; but, as individuals, we must number not the days of others only, but those of our own life, in particular. If we have fared badly, to consider whether this were not owing to some fault in our previous conduct, which escaped

our observation; if well, to thank God for his blessing upon our exertions.

Having satisfied our minds what is the issue of a bad life, in a worldly point of view, let us dwell awhile upon the issue of it, with regard to our souls.

The lives and deaths of men afford us no instruction on this part of the subject; but the pages of the Gospel do most amply. They inform us, that hereafter we are to receive according to the deeds done on earth, whether good or evil; that the good are to rise into life and joy eternal, the wicked to endless misery.

Therefore, when you neglect to attend the house of God, on the Sabbath day, you lose the only opportunity you have of learning that wisdom which is nowhere to be found among mankind, and cometh from above only to teach the poor and lowly.

I confess myself indebted to the Holy Bible for this system of numbering our days which I have described to you. For in one part of Scripture we are told that "the lip of truth shall be esta-

blished for ever: a lying tongue is but for a moment;" and in another we read of the sudden deaths of Ananias and Sapphira for falsehood.

Solomon, in his Proverbs, admonishes us, that these were written "to teach wisdom and give instruction;" to enable us "to discern the words of understanding;" to persuade us "to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;" "to give wariness to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion."

"*The fear of the Lord*," he says, "*is the* BEGINNING *of knowledge*." But that knowledge must be sought after diligently, as for hid treasures. And where, my brethren, are we to seek it? In like manner as I have already explained to you. The prophet exclaims, "Wisdom crieth aloud; she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the opening of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words."

To these places our attention is turned to gain

some knowledge. "The fear of the Lord," he says, "is the beginning of knowledge," not the end of it. Our own district, the streets, the places of concourse, the market-town, afford us the last continually. So it is that we are directed to number our days, and glean instruction from those scenes which life is ever presenting to our view. In the chief places of concourse, characters of all descriptions are to be seen, from the worst of all to the best. Without the gates culprits were formerly executed among the Jews: from which we are to consider the ignominious and certain shame to which crime will gradually bring us. In the streets, the harlot and the drunkard are to be seen, and Wisdom crieth aloud, "Flee from her, go not nigh; for her chamber leads to death, and her feet go down to hell." The drunkard tottering home is no better than the beast driven to market, which knows not what may befal it, ere it reach its resting-place. As the beast is unexpectedly deprived of life, so may be the drunkard;

and the hand of the spoiler may deprive him with impunity of those earnings which his family have a right to share.

In the streets is to be heard the foul-mouthed blasphemer, on whose lips some horrid imprecation is ever hanging, ready to be let fall on each excitement of his passion, alas! sometimes without provocation, from an evil habit. But when passion takes the helm, then an additional impulse only, which intoxication may give, is wanting, to make him stain his hands with murder, and which nothing but the innate fear of losing his own life on account of it might prevent. From the society of all such as these, how every virtuous and kind-hearted relation and friend, every modest and forbearing neighbour retreat, as from objects of contempt and disgust, more than of dread or hatred!

Within the city the hurrying crowds are to be seen; and as we contemplate them, we may ruminate on the pageantry of the high, the gaiety of the heedless, the vanity and folly of the proud

and comely, the anxiety marked on the brow of the man of business. Let us look on these as they pass along, without one thought apparently of eternity before them. Let us look but somewhile longer, and lo! there cometh no murmuring crowd, no gaudy equipage, no sprightly faces, but a company of mourners, conveying some being, departed this life, to the grave!

Thus the streets teach us to redeem our time, because the days are evil; that all is vanity under the sun; that death is but life unmasked; that "man heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them." That we must not have hope in this life only, but in that which is to be, and never to pass away.

It is not the city, the street, or the place of concourse only, which should teach us to number our days. The sight of the flower of the garden, the beast of the field, the bird of the air, the clouds of heaven, the winds, the rain, all of these, even down to an instrument of husbandry, and

a harvest season, conspire to the above end, and instruct us in our duty to God, to our neighbour, and ourselves.

When we see the lily that toils not, neither does it spin; and remember that we are told in Scripture that Solomon was not to be compared, in all his glory, to one of these, though his robe was white; how vain must the artful pomp and grandeur of mankind appear! and thus are we admonished against pride and vanity. Is the ox treading out the corn? Scripture tells us that it shall not be muzzled, and so teaches us that the labourer is worthy of his hire. If the sparrow falls not to the ground unobserved by the eye of God, how much must he regard his creatures upon earth! If a cloud rising from the west portends rain, as we think, we ought also to observe other manifestations of God's providence. The wind springing up and blowing where it listeth, instructs us how the Holy Spirit sheds its influence on the hearts of mankind. The rain, descending on the just and on the unjust, and

the sun rising on the evil and the good, should remind us to forgive others their trespasses, to look pitifully upon those who are in error; to overcome evil with good, and to live in charity with all men. And lastly, the harvest season should annually awaken to remembrance the great day of judgment. Our Lord described the world as the fields, the angels as the reapers. As, therefore, the weeds are gathered and burned in the fire, and the corn is gathered into granaries; in like manner shall it fare with the wicked and the good hereafter. The evil must rise to a state of misery, the good to enter into mansions of eternal bliss.

I therefore trust, my brethren, that you will now learn to number your days, and prudently reflecting upon the past, gather from it that instruction which the Almighty most abundantly scatters around you, for your benefit here as well as hereafter. Then, although your days are but as an handbreadth, and your age as nothing before God, yet will you find that you have not walked

in a vain show, or disquieted yourself in vain; that you have heaped up those riches which will be your enjoyment in a better state, where neither moth doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

Thus teach us then, O Lord, to number our days, that we may serve thee in newness of life, and henceforth walk in thy ways, that at the last we may be found worthy of thy favour, and comforted in the world to come, after a life of trouble, vanity, and sorrow here. Amen.

SERMON VI.

PROVERBS, xix. 5.

A false witness shall not be unpunished; and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.

IT is a duty enjoined the minister of the gospel by our blessed Lord, that he should exert his endeavours to eradicate or stem the commission of any practice among Christians that is either derogatory to their character, or injurious to the interests of society *.

Slander is a crime so heinous in the sight of God, that in the gospel it is only to be found in that list of atrocious offences, in which are some forbidden being even named by Christians †; and

* 2 Timothy, iii. 16, 17. † Blackstone's Commentaries.

the iniquity and mischiefs of this vice are such, that I shall have to trespass on your patience in exposing it.

Sacred history instructs us, that the Almighty, in the beginning of the world, intended that mankind should enjoy a certain portion of happiness on earth, but in a dependent manner; for it is the will of God, and hence a duty that one mortal should assist another, by performing those acts to his neighbour, which humanity suggests and revelation commands, and also by not doing any thing which might be detrimental to him *.

Vice, in any shape, was never yet pursued by an individual without doing injury to others, either directly or indirectly; first, by its affecting the person of another immediately; secondly, by the contaminating influence of its commission. Thus theft practised by one is a direct injury on

* This duty is enforced throughout the whole of the writings of the Evangelists, and, therefore, particular references to passages from them, to illustrate the truth of what I have advanced, are unnecessary.

another individual ; but drunkenness and swearing are only injurious indirectly, as they affect not the person or estate of others, but only their minds by pernicious example *.

Hence it is, that for the commission of any vice, or the indulgence of any passion, which uncurbed would disturb the peace and interests of religion and society, the laws of God, and those of civilized nations, have provided due punishments. Under the Jewish economy, the evil passions of our nature were controlled in a great measure; by the gospel dispensation they are commanded to be restrained from the first rising within our bosom †.

It is, therefore, of vast importance, particularly to the Christian, to understand the distinction which is drawn in the text betwixt a false witness and a liar, and the evil they produce, and to learn what punishment is designed in it by implication for both.

* Blair's Sermons, vol. iv. p. 158.
† Matthew, v. 22. 28. 39. 46.

For this purpose, I shall explain the nature of slander, and point out how the guilt of it may be contracted. I shall represent as briefly as possible the various mischiefs and evils of it, and deliver to you, lastly, some few rules which, through the grace of God, may be serviceable in preserving you from the contagion of it.

I. The liar is one who asserts that to be true which he knows to be not the truth; the false witness is closely allied to him: he is one who propagates any intelligence as true, which, of his own knowledge and experience, he cannot say is founded upon fact. He assumes the character, language, and station of a witness to a matter, in which he was neither present nor concerned, and, on that account, he is, to all intent, a false witness. Such a one *may* report what is really true, yet he is then no other than a faithful reporter, and there is much danger of error even in that character; still he is not a true witness; and all those who make similar statements are *false witnesses*.

How easily, then, may slander be disseminated,

when the lip, which can speak the truth, as readily can convey a falsehood; and our thoughts, our words, and our actions being guised oftentimes by information carelessly received from one another, how quickly, if unguarded, may we become slanderous!

II. Slander consists either in defamation or detraction: defamation is a false imputation of vice; detraction a needless diminution of virtue; the one traducing us to be what we are not, the other lessening what we really are.

III. We may incur the guilt of this crime, and render ourselves liable to the punishment announced against it, either in judicial process or in common conversation. In judicial process, when we rise up in judgment against our neighbour, and attest that which we are aware is untrue and forged, or of which we are not infallibly certain.

This sin is aggravated by two circumstances attending it: first, not only does it injure a person in his name and reputation, but in his person and estate: it is perverting that law which was in-

tended to be a safeguard and fence to every man's property, and turning it against itself instead, and thus making it the instrument of our cruelty, revenge, malice, or envy; and Solomon saith, "He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool*;" and it is he who, according to the Psalmist, "hath said in his heart, that there is no God†." Secondly, Because, in courts of judicature, witnesses are required to give their evidence upon oath, taken solemnly, in the name of almighty God, a false testimony is bold and dreadful blasphemy. It is calling God, who is the author of holiness, and is eternal truth itself, to confirm a lie.

The guilt of slandering may also be contracted in our ordinary conversation; and this may be done either openly or secretly. The first is the more manly and generous method; and is termed reviling, or reproaching: the latter more base and cowardly; and is properly termed "backbiting."

* Proverbs, x. 18. † Psalms.

But the sarcastic remark, or the jocular taunt, are sometimes made the vehicles of conveying slander. Among those who esteem themselves as refined and polished, we often see this evil habit sanctioned by an approving smile; and there are those individuals who pride themselves on endeavouring to make their neighbour appear ridiculous, imagining foolishly that their light and impertinent wit never looks so beautiful as when dyed in the blushes of others; while the gay and thoughtless, forgetting how suddenly the same shaft may be levelled against them, join in this paltry pastime.

Those who nurture this evil are fond of disguising their brethren under false and antic shapes of their own invention, and then fall upon them in a strain of irony and scoffing*, which is called by the apostle "cruel mockings," and wherein not the one who has most wit, but he that hath least modesty, hath generally the advantage.

* Nero ordered some Christians to be clothed in the skins of wild beasts, and then to be worried and destroyed by hounds. The effect of slander is equally cruel.

Backbiting, whispering, and carrying up and down tales, like those busy tongues mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Report, and we will report," is the secret mode of conveying slander. In this manner a slanderous rumour will float abroad, and, like the river Nile, its source be never known, or too late for any effectual purpose, to those thus injured, be discovered: it will carry blots of disgrace over the character of our neighbour, and yet the first author of it lie concealed in the crowd, as fishes in the mud which they themselves have stirred up and made.

These brief observations apply chiefly to defamation: but detraction is also slander, and highly reprehensible.

This is committed in the fullest sense of the word when we divulge unnecessarily those imperfections and faults which are in others. Even truth, if spoken, as too often it is, with the greatest levity, be used without any honourable and good object in view, and it tends to the hurt and prejudice of another, becomes slanderous; because

it is a needless diminution of character, and is wholly inconsistent with that spirit of charity and goodness required by the religion of Christians, which obliges them to be compassionate and tender, and conceal the imperfections and follies of others, rather than proclaim them from the housetops, or trumpet them forth in the highways *.

IV. It is a vice which is disreputable to all who nurture it, either by practice or any other encouragement; and as the adder is found among weeds, so this vice, base and sordid in itself, reigns among the baser sort of mankind. It is equally injurious in effect, whether the arrow flieth by night or in the noon-day; whether a good name be battered down by open calumny, hardened ignorance, and impudent assertion, or be blown up by the assumed modesty of the modulated whisper of one neighbour to another. Both methods are very prejudicial to fame and reputation, and are contrary to

* 1 Corinthians, xiii. 1—9. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity; these three: but the greatest of these is charity."

all rules of justice, whether looked upon as of divine or moral obligation.

V. Is it needful to detail the mischiefs and evil which slander creates, after showing you in what that vice consists? Must the advice of the prophet be brought forward to tell you that "in the multitude of words there lacketh not sin, but he that refraineth his lips is wise *?" They, however, may be summed up in the words of a celebrated divine: "It interrupts the good order, and breaks the peace of society; it brings forward and nourishes several bad passions. It draws men aside from a proper attention to the discharge of their own duty †." "So it is that in every age a set of men have existed, who, driven by an unhappy activity of spirit, oftener, perhaps, than by any settled design of doing ill, or any motive of ambition and interest, love to intermeddle where they have no concern, to inquire into the private affairs of others; and, from the imperfect information which

* Proverbs, x. 19. † Dr. Blair, vol. iv. p. 146.

they collect, to form conclusions concerning their circumstances and character. These are they who, in Scripture, are characterised as *tattlers and busy bodies in other men's matters*, and from whom we are called to turn away. They are dangerous troubles of the world. While they conceive themselves to be inoffensive, they are sowing dissension and feuds. Crossing the lines in which others move, they create confusion and awaken resentment. Hence many a friendship has been broken, the peace of many a family has been overthrown, and much bitter and lasting discord has been propagated through society."

"The froward man soweth strife, and the whisperer separateth chief friends." "The words of a talebearer are as wounds that go down into the belly;" but "where no wood is, there the fire goeth out; so, where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth *."

Slander not merely separates friends, the mem-

* The Proverbs of Solomon.

bers of a family, and neighbours; it cankers the character, saps the welfare, and bears off the peace of individuals, unless redress can be obtained by a proceeding which is extraordinary, tedious, and unsatisfactory to the pure in heart, namely, by purchase. The humblest casuist must laugh at the folly of it: for if our livelihood does not depend on our reputation, a mite adjudged for the injury received will be the only recompense made, and thus the slander will appear to have had some foundation. Nor is it always within the power of the injured to avenge their cause by law. Few who have the means are willing to embroil themselves in such additional trouble; and those who do, seldom obtain the reparation sought for, on account of some informality or other in the proceedings; and they return home more injured from the publicity given to their case than they were before their appeal to justice.

With odds such as these, slanderers, the whisperer and talebearer stalk abroad among society,

careless and fearless, exhaling their pestilential breath. In one sense, they may lay claim to impartiality, inasmuch as they shed their venom upon the innocent and guilty alike. Discrimination, which is usually their boast, shows that they have little of that talent in their character, and, on the other hand, affords this caution for them, viz. " he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone."

There are some who make reputed sins of others the subject of mirth and derision, regardless of the disgrace and reproach which attend them. How many travail in pain with rumours, till they have disburthened themselves into the ears of others! Many are but idle dissemblers of their purpose; but others, more insidiously malicious, with the appearance of soberness and regret, with a humble and affected voice, whisper a calumnious report to one and to another, and another, with expressions of disbelief to all. It is thus that hypocrisy often walks through society in the attire of truth and

meekness. Let these recollect that "even a fool when he holdeth his peace is counted wise*;" for if they disbelieve, or are unwilling to believe, why do they promote the slander by communication of any kind, which, in the best light it can be viewed, is of an evil tendency.

Others convey slander by hints and insinuations to others, and in this manner these "busy-bodies and hypocrites with their mouths destroy their neighbour †." Notwithstanding such stratagems and their like may appear more select and delicate, in reality they are blackened with the deepest dye of malice; because slander thus buzzed abroad suggests something worse than it discovers, and creates, in unwary and unthinking minds, a conviction of something extremely gross having been done, though they cannot divine what it is.

It is to be hoped that the simple, who believe every word, are few, compared with the prudent, who "look well to their going‡;" and that, in

* Prov. xvi. 28. † Prov. xi. 9. ‡ Prov. xiv. 14.

most cases, slander emanates from ignorance rather than malice. Yet sometimes pride and folly occasion it, and people are led away with the ardent hope that, by trampling on the character of others, they will raise their own the higher.

A rumour gains additions as it passes from one mouth to another; and in talebearing, falsehood therefore accumulates on falsehood *. Slander floats upon report, as filth upon the kennel; and mendicants for character and employment are the only persons who should be found to take it up. The sow cannot wallow in the mire without dirtying

* "The inquisitive and curious are always talkative. What they learn, or fancy themselves to have learned, concerning others, they are generally in haste to divulge. A tale which the malicious have invented, and the credulous have propagated; a rumour which, arising among the multitude, and transmitted by one to another, has, in every step of its progress, gained fresh additions, becomes in the end the foundation of confident assertion, and of rash and severe judgment."—Sermons by Dr. Blair, vol. iv. p. 150.

"Hi narrata ferunt alio; mensuraque ficti
Crescit; et auditis aliquid novus adjicit auctor."
Ovid. Metam. l. xii. v. 57.

herself, so neither does the Christian hold converse with a talebearer without contamination.

Indeed, those who hold familiar intercourse with whisperers and talebearers deservedly acquire the like character themselves, are considered as fellow-traders in the same detestable traffic, and seldom fail to obtain credit for dealing in a just proportion of that commodity in which their friends abound. I say, *friends*, and call the intercourse familiar, because no one dare utter slander to another unless on terms of familiarity, or on encouragement to do so. They also who *seek* for rumours, or give attention to the scandalous talk of others, are as culpable as they who purvey it; and, of the various kinds of slanderers, I believe these are the most numerous.

It is an evil which seems triumphantly to challenge the power and influence of religion, and doubly disgraces avowed Christians, more particularly the superiors in a Christian household. When these allow domestics, or the stranger who is within their gates, to communicate any thing to them

of a slanderous nature, they encourage the vice, and degrade themselves, by disregarding the revealed precepts of God, and by stooping to countenance a crime in their dependents which even equals endeavour invariably to cover with privacy and secrecy among themselves. Those who pursue this practice must expect to hear, sooner or later, from their household, more impertinent remarks, and to be looked upon by others with suspicion, oftentimes neglected, and sometimes viewed as enemies. What is permitted to be said of one neighbour it may be supposed will be allowed concerning another also.

It is likewise no less a disgrace to the domestic to carry abroad what accidentally falls from the lips of their superiors in relation to others. Their situation, like every state in life, whether private or public, may be creditably maintained, or covered with shame. In whatever condition we are placed, to act always in character should be our constant rule. He who acts in character is above contempt, though his station be low. He who acts out of

character is despicable, though his station be ever so high. "What is that to thee," our Lord said to Peter, when he impertinently inquired of his master, "and what shall this man do?" Attend to your own duty, and what is suitable to your character and place, and what the world has a title to expect from thee. Every excursion of vain curiosity about others is a subtraction from that time and thought which was due to God and to ourselves. Let no man think more of himself than he ought to think, but soberly and independently as God hath dealt to him: what he does, let it not be with eye-service, as men pleasers, but as servants doing the will of God concerning them *. The word of God teaches them, and all of us, to be true and just, diligent and faithful, honest and virtuous, and that we study to be quiet and mind our business.

Slander is a vice which puts to the blush those virtues which are always ready to adorn the female

* Ephesians, vi. 5, 6, 7, 8.

character, and shows manhood as a coward, whose natural propensity is to be malicious *.

It is incredible, how much time and attention are thrown away in examining the affairs of others, and discussing their conduct. Were time and attention only thrown away, the evil would in some degree be less; but they are worse than thrown away, they are not merely fruitless, but productive of much mischief. Such a habit of thought is connected with a thousand vices. It is the constant source of rash and severe censure. It arises from envy and jealousy. It foments ill nature and pride. It propagates misunderstanding and discord.

Wherever this corruption of morals prevails, guilt is fostered and encouraged. The modest and the virtuous, when assailed by slander, have no better defence against its attacks than the immoral; and for this cause, vice flourishes amidst the confusion and mistakes, which originate in

* Dr. Blair's Sermons, vol. iv. 150, 151.

talebearing. Conscience may soothe and support the former, under the want of opportunity and means to clear away a rumour concerning them; the latter, dead to conscience, triumph in their infamy, and take care sedulously to fan with incessant whisperings the scandal against others which hath been lighted up.

Slander defeated recoils, and often exposes the wilful or the foolish liar; but how often will the slanderer, after being diligently sought and traced, escape farther and farther from the grasp, and when apparently within reach disappear altogether, either by a denial of his offence when accused of it, or by the assertion of forgetfulness or total ignorance of the matter.

Can cordiality and friendship exist in a neighbourhood where this vice reigns, and is countenanced by those who cannot plead ignorance as an excuse for sin and folly? Can one neighbour look upon another without distrust, and, if a party should be aggrieved by it, must he not think within himself, that his friends and acquaintance have

not strictly discharged either the duties of friendship, of justice, or of religion? that they have listened to a rumour and not checked it. Henceforward neighbours watch one another's every act, and catch at every expression used; distrust is succeeded by coldness of manner; they begin to avoid each other, and, at last, more is said or more is done invidiously, and, without another word on the subject, they separate from being friends, and meet as enemies in future.

It may be inquired, is immoral conduct to pass unnoticed? By no means, and certain characters are mentioned in Scripture, from whom we are to turn away, and they are busy bodies; and there are others whom we are to *note* even, and have no dealings with them. But let those, who are the friends of the accused or slandered, first ascertain, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that whatever is alleged or reported concerning him be true, and what extenuation the case will admit, and not rashly act upon information derived from rumour, which may result from envy or malice; then let

one or more of them go and warn their neighbour *, and if he repents, and engages to sin no more, it is their duty immediately, by their representations to others, the majority of whom will be found relying upon hearsay, to wipe away any obloquy that may have become attached to his character in society.

Should such conduct excite his anger and disapprobation, it will betray a weakness and an obstinacy deserving only your contempt and that of others, and will justify the discontinuance of all

* Matt. xviii. 17. "Wherefore, instead of being critics on others, let us employ our criticism on ourselves. Leaving others to be judged by Him who searcheth the heart, let us implore His assistance for enabling us to act well our own part, and to follow Christ." Dr. Blair. Many passages of Scripture support this exhortation of Dr. Blair's; but Dr. Blair has not anticipated, in his excellent sermon on "Curiosity concerning the affairs of others," the above objection to it. Because it is certainly the duty of every one to be prudent in the choice of friends, stewards, &c. &c., and to investigate their character and mode of life before they are received into our society and confidence. Nevertheless, though such information is sometimes absolutely necessary, with the wisdom of the serpent, we are to be as harmless as the dove, and not use it to uncharitable ends.

intercourse with him. Yet, remember always, that even this friendly act should be done with great discretion; for the purpose neither of making yourselves appear more virtuous, nor of exacting a constrained courtesy in return, but for the good of public morality, the security of private virtue, and the harmony of society.

VI. Let me next suggest a few rules which will be of service in preserving you from the contagion of this vice.

First, you must gain and practise an independent spirit; at the same time be cautious always to render respect to whom respect is due. Secondly, never indulge an impertinent curiosity, by busying yourself in those concerns of others with which you have nothing strictly to do. Thirdly, know yourself, avoid pride equally as servility, and cultivate contentment.

I. An independent spirit is not influenced by party interest, and acts upon its own suggestions, seeks only for the truth, and is inclined to honesty

in all its words and deeds. Not so they who are swayed by particular interests; prejudice reigns supreme among them, and is the jaundice of their soul, which shows the actions of others in the colour which its disease puts upon them. It is difficult for these to have an esteem for others who are not of the same judgment and party: if it is not difficult, we know, such is the case in general, that they have not; and, at all events, it makes them more ready to listen to any thing to their disadvantage, and inclined to disseminate it. This is not charity, the Christian bond of peace; it is injustice: it is worse than judgment without mercy: and without charity, all our actions, our humility, and our religious devotions, are worth nothing. But when discretion and benevolence attend our thoughts and words, we shall disdain and abhor to promote the injury of another individual, if it be only probable, by any thing we say or do. Besides, it is only prudent in regard to ourselves; and it is for this reason that we are told, "curse not the king, no, not in thy thoughts; and

curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber, for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter;" i. e. whatever you say of others is most likely to be repeated, and come to their knowledge.

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

Hence we find that person's religion is declared to be in vain, who, upon making conscience of some other duties, is blown up into a false opinion of his own sanctity, though at the same time he bridle not his own tongue. A failing, says a learned author, greatly to be lamented, usual among many who express a more than ordinary zeal for the outward and solemn exercises of religion, constant and devout attendance upon public prayers, and sermons, and sacraments; sober apparently in their public conversation, regular and exemplary in their families, just in their dealings, even to a nicety *. Yet even

* Dean Stanhope Gosp. 4th S. Advent.

these (so far very good) persons are oftentimes malicious detractors, busy inquirers, bold censurers, and bitter backbiters. And these are they who deceive themselves with the form of godliness, but whose religion is vain.

II. Stifle that curiosity which would lead you to desire to know as much of the affairs of others as of your own, when you are not immediately concerned in them: whether they concern you or not, never depend upon floating rumours for information; they may be sent forth by envy, malice, or idle suspicion.

You will then neither raise slander yourself, nor propagate it from others; you will give that justice to your neighbour, whether absent or present, which you would that he should deal to you. Besides every one may find work enough at home to do; within our hearts, and within our dwellings, or in our business, if we are careful to manage these well, we shall have scarce either time or inclination to receive or divulge reports of others. It is work enough for one, and for every one, to mind

and mend themselves; and would mankind but endeavour to do so as they ought, fewer faults would be found, if seen, in others, and more within ourselves; and thus would every society be at unity within itself.

III. Know yourself; avoid pride equally as servility; learn to be content. Vain glory and self-love always produce envy, and envy begets detraction. An envious man hears with remorse the praises of another, and will revive a false report, a slander, or a lie, to blast his fame, greedily believing that all that falls from the character of another is added to his own reputation. When he beholds his neighbour's fame, like a well-cultivated plant, begins to grow and to spread about him, he then desires to lop or to cut it down, because, forsooth, it is a hindrance to his prospect, and the world cannot take so fair a view of him as he is anxious for. "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who is able to stand before envy?" Prov. xxvii. 4. "Before honour is humility," therefore know yourself. Pride is the master sin

and first-born of the Devil; "when pride cometh, then cometh shame, but with the lowly is wisdom;" "by pride contention cometh." Pride is supported on slander, for the proud man taketh away from another that he may add to himself, which is needless detraction; but what hath man to be proud of? hath he any thing that he did not receive?

On the other hand, avoid servility; "it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in princes;" and "to have respect of persons is not good; for for a piece of bread that man will transgress." Prov. xxviii. 21. "The north wind driveth away rain, so will an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." Prov. xxv. 23. The mean man will flatter another at the expense of his neighbour; but he that walketh upright walketh surely, and need not bow down. Learn also to be content with the lot God hath cast into your lap, for the whole disposing thereof is from the Lord *. Amend it by all honourable methods, by diligence and pru-

* 1 Timothy, vi. 6. Proverbs. 2 Thess. iii. 11, 12, 13.

dence, and be satisfied with progressive increase, by none other. Covet not another's reputation or goods, and slander will be far from your lips.

It may be thought by some individuals, that this subject is unworthy of the preacher of the gospel, and the fitter subject for a moral essay; but these forget, that throughout the whole of the sacred volume, from the first preaching of Jesus Christ to the last of the apostles, charity and brotherly love are strictly inculcated. Whatever, therefore, is subversive of these golden laws merits our attention and strongest animadversion. "Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine," saith St. Paul to Titus; "that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience; the aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, and good: young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded."

Titus, ii. 1, 6. "Put them in mind to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men." Tit. iii. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." "The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things; behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth; and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the whole course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." James, iii. 2, 8. We are elsewhere told, that out of the heart are the issues of life and death; and presently we shall find this truth corroborated by our Saviour's words. "For those things," said Jesus, "which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, *false witness.*" Matt. xv. 18, 19. We must look to the correction of the heart, and then shall we

order our conversation aright. It is the heart that is deceitful and wickedly inclined; sow this with righteousness, and our tongue, when it sends forth praises to God, will dispense charity towards mankind. "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; for where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." James, iii. 14. "Who then is wise and endued with knowledge among you? let them show, out of a good conversation, their works with meekness of wisdom. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy; and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

Finally, I have now to beseech you, that, putting away lying and malicious whisperings, you speak truth, and be careful that it is truth, every man with his neighbour: avoid foolish talking and

jesting, which are not convenient, and do all things without murmurings and disputings.

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren *. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge; and there is but one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou, then, that judgeth another?" James, iv. 11.

"Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings," 1 Pet. ii. 1, live by the Word of God. "*Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering.*" Coloss. iii. 12. As touching brotherly love, there ought not to be occasion for us to address you, for you are taught of God to love one another, and if his word prevail not, we can only warn and admonish; but we may beseech you,

* Matt. viii. 1, 2, 3, 12. xii. 35.

that ye study to be quiet, and do your own business, that ye walk honestly towards others. 1 Thess. iv. 11.

If you will love life, and would see good days, refrain your tongue from evil, and your lips that they speak no guile *; eschew evil, and do good; seek peace and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. 1 Pet. iii.

I shall be pardoned if, in conclusion, I bring the attention of those whose duty and occupation consist chiefly in domestic concerns more particularly to this subject, especially the younger portion of that community, who have much time upon their hands; because, were they diligently to cultivate and form their character to the model set up in the gospel for them, "our daughters would then indeed be as the polished corners of the temple;" whose adorn-

* "But I say unto you, every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment." Matt. xix. 17, 18.

ing let it not be merely that outward adorning of the hair, and wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel; for "as a jewel in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman without discretion:" but let it be "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price *." Let them give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully; but be industrious and virtuous, not idlers: on the contrary, keepers at home, not wandering about from house to house, and not only avoiding idleness, but becoming tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not; but be ye holy, chaste, and charitable in your lives.

By exhortations like these, it is my hope that you may be found in the last day blameless and harmless, without rebuke, in the midst of a perverse generation, and among whom ye may shine as lights in the world †. I have simply, and as

* 1 Peter, iii. † Phil. ii. 16.

briefly as I could, pointed out to you the nature and the evil of slander, and how to avoid it. It is my duty now to unfold to you the punishment assigned to its commission, that ye, as St. Peter writes, may neither suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in the affairs of others *.

In the serious catalogue of vices contained in the Holy Scriptures, we find slander classed among them. They are too numerous and too horrible for recital; allusion to them will be sufficient. When enumerating the sins of the latter times, the apostle St. Paul says, that speaking lies in hypocrisies will be a reigning sin among them †. In another epistle he ranks backbiters or slanderers with murderers and haters of God ‡; and in another, "envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, and tumults," are in the same list; and, in the sixth chapter of this epistle, it is expressly forewarned, that those who are guilty of

* 1 Peter, v. 15. † 1 Timothy, iv. 3. ‡ Romans, i. 30.

any of these offences shall not inherit the kingdom of God *.

Is it probable, is it reasonable, therefore, to suppose that any person should hardly think that to be a sin which, we have seen, destroys the peace of society and the welfare of individuals, and is classed with murder and adultery, and the blackest crimes, in the Scriptures; such as are wholly inconsistent with a state of salvation, and must certainly exclude the guilty from the kingdom of God and Christ? Do we believe the gospel to be the word of God? Can we longer allow ourselves in the practice of a sin, than which there is hardly any fault in the lives of mankind more frequently mentioned, more odiously branded, or more severely threatened in that sacred book?

"Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour shall be cut off, and the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped:" and for this it was in effect revealed to St. John, as it had been before to the

* 1 Cor. vi. 10. Romans, i. 29. 1 Timothy, iv. 2.

prophets, that all the wicked shall be turned into hell, and the people that forget God above them*.

See, then, my brethren, that ye walk circumspectly; redeeming the time, because the days are evil; and be ye holy in future, in all manner of conversation. By the blessing of God, I trust that this discourse, nearly the last I shall deliver to you, may make due impression, and be the means of reclaiming those who are immersed in the guilt of this dirty and evil habit, and of preserving those from the contagion of it who are not yet infected: and let them be thus emphatically taught, that "a false witness shall not be unpunished, and that he that speaketh lies shall not escape."

* Revelations, xxi. 8.

THE END.

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